

## Wouldn't It Be Nice?

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## Wouldn't It Be Nice?

by [Qupid](#)

### Summary

Dream is slowly working his way across the continent for reasons known only to him. Sapnap and George are determined to follow him. He's mysterious and definitely not entirely human, but between Sapnap's tendency to set things on fire and George's constant confusion, the three of them might find answers.

or

A nonlinear fantasy/adventure narrative featuring poly!dteam with a few guest appearances of other mcyt peeps you know and love.

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Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

### Notes

I'm going to be updating tags as I post chapters. The rating might change, I'm not sure, I guess it'll depend on what I want to write.

I want to make it clear that even though it seems like Dream is much older than Sapnap and George during parts of this, he is still actually only a year older than Sapnap and younger than George. He just sort of shapeshifts to stop people from asking questions and to blend in.

EDIT: Here's the chronological order of the chapters from earliest to latest, just to keep y'all from getting confused. (I'm including chapters I have planned but haven't written yet)

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

## It's Best When You Say It

"This is stupid. This is so dumb. I literally don't know why I'm worried." George was practically pacing a hole into the ground. It had been only fifteen minutes since Dream disappeared over the horizon and George had spent every second of it fretting. He started readjusting his goggles just to give his hands something to do.

"I give him two hours," said Sapnap in a bored tone.

George abruptly stopped pacing. "What?"

"You heard me. Two hours." Sapnap waved a hand through the air like as though what he was saying should be obvious.

It wasn't obvious to George. "What does that mean?"

Sapnap sighed. "It means in two hours, Dream is going to come crawling back all *Sapnap, George, I'm so sorry, you are my bestest friends and I didn't mean it!* with all that feeling crap he always does." Sapnap's imitation of Dream's voice sounded like a nine year old girl.

"Sapnap." George said incredulously, he suddenly felt unsteady on his feet and sat on the ground next to his friend before his legs could give out under him. "You're the one that usually does the feeling crap."

"Oh yeah." The younger man laughed. George could only shake his head at his friend's antics. He was pretty sure that Sapnap was just trying to distract him from his worry, but it just kept gnawing at the back of his mind. Dream always had a habit of wandering off alone after an argument, but he always came back. It didn't stop the anxiety. What if this time Dream didn't come back? What if he finally had enough of George and Sapnap and decided to cut his losses?

Nothing scared George more than the idea of being thrown away by Dream, that their friendship meant so little. Maybe if Dream was a little less secretive, if he would talk a little bit more about his past, George wouldn't be as worried. They had been friends, best friends, for five years and yet George barely knew a thing about him. He suspected that it was the same for Sapnap even though he knew Dream longer than George had.

Five years ago the masked man had appeared out of the forest near George's village with Sapnap trailing lazily behind him. It had taken less than an hour for George to utterly despise them. Sapnap acted like he couldn't decide between being overwhelmingly charming or just outright insulting. Dream was even worse. No matter how much George tried to avoid him, the blonde followed George around like a duckling following its mother and wherever Dream went, Sapnap was only a few steps behind. He was also just so smug. George couldn't see his face behind the mask, but whenever Dream spoke, a smug grin was audible enough to drive George insane. The worst part of the most infuriating week of George's life was that when Dream and Sapnap finally decided to move on, George was right there with them arguing with Sapnap over the best name for a fish while Dream tried his best to not pass out from laughing too hard.

In five years George and Sapnap had both grown taller. They filled out their armour better and had developed callouses from years of using a sword. Sapnap's natural charm had developed into downright flirting and George was no longer so stiff when it came to emotions.

Dream hadn't changed a bit. He was eerily identical to the Dream George met five years earlier. In

fact, the other day George had been so surprised to realize he looked older than the masked man, he nearly walked right off the edge of a cliff without noticing it. Every day George spent with Dream he was constantly left with more questions about him than answers. What kind of man didn't age? Didn't show his face? Didn't tell his two closest friends his real name? Maybe if Dream could give a reason for being so secretive, it wouldn't bother George so much, but whenever he asked any questions, the blonde would avoid him for hours afterwards.

"How can you stand it?" George asked, causing Sapnap to look up from the flowers he was fiddling with, it looked like he was trying to make a crown. The younger man tilted his head in confusion and George fought the urge to sigh. "How can you be okay with not knowing anything about Dream? You've known him longer and he hasn't told you anything about himself!"

Sapnap dropped the flowers and pursed his lips. "It's annoying yeah, but it's not like I don't know anything about him." George scowled, obviously not pleased with the answer. "I'm serious! I know he isn't a fan of sweets, his favorite color is green, he likes sneaking up on you because it's funny when you scream.

"Sometimes when you're asleep and he thinks I can't hear, he'll practice speaking with your accent. He'll even try making mushroom stew like that one crazy lady from your village because he's scared you'll get homesick and that'll keep you from wanting to leave. When I first met him he pretended to be bad at flirting because he saw how happy it made me to be able to teach him something after he spent so long teaching me how to fight.

"I don't know if he'll show us his face or tell us why he doesn't age. I don't know who his parents are, where he learned to fight, or why he doesn't sleep. But I do know that he'd take a hundred arrows to the chest before he'd let something happen to either of us. And I know when he says he loves us, he means it." George's mouth fell open in surprise. He didn't think that Sapnap paid that much attention to him and Dream.

Sapnap scratched the back of his head sheepishly as if he were embarrassed, which was even more shocking. George didn't think the younger man was capable of embarrassment. "I guess what I'm saying is that I want to know more about Dream. I'm always going to want to know more about both of you because I love you guys, but I don't need to know more. Not if you don't want to tell me."

Now it was George's turn to feel embarrassed. Sapnap probably thought George had made an ass of himself by yelling at Dream. "I guess I need to apologize." George mumbled. He felt even more miserable than before. Sapnap only rolled his eyes.

"Come on, let's go hunting. Dream will probably be starving by the time he gets back." Sapnap stood and stretched. George felt unsure and it must have shown on his face because Sapnap grabbed him by the arm and hauled him to his feet before he could protest.

"What the heck Sapnap!"

"What? It's not like you're doing anything important."

"I'm waiting for Dream to come back!" George snapped.

"So you agree that he's coming back then?"

"Wha- why do you have to be such an idiot?"

Sapnap grinned like the cat who caught the goddamned canary. "I'm your idiot, idiot." George

wanted to smack him. So he did, or at least he tried to. Sapnap dodged the obvious swing easily before sprinting in the direction of a herd of cows. George was right on his heels, ready to tackle him to the ground.

Several hours later, the chase ended in a draw and the two of them were completely exhausted. Neither could be bothered to lift a sword or bow to hunt and the two of them silently agreed to just eat whatever rations they had in their packs.

"Should we make a fire?" George asked between bites from his apple.

Sapnap shrugged. "Probably. We aren't exactly where Dream left us and it'll be easier for him to find us once it gets dark." At the mention of Dream, George's mood soured. He couldn't help but feel anxious again, after all, it was his fault that Dream stormed off in the first place.

*"Why won't you say that you love me George?"*

*"Love? How am I supposed to love someone I don't know anything about? How am I supposed to even trust them?"*

George couldn't stop thinking about how hurt Dream had looked, even with the mask hiding his features, it was clear from how the masked man had hunched his shoulders that George had gone too far. He didn't mean it. George trusted Dream with his life. He loved him, he just had a hard time saying it.

"Hey." Sapnap lightly kicked George in the leg. "Are you going to help me build a fire or what?" George grumbled, but got to his feet to help Sapnap gather wood for the fire.

"Do you think Dream will be mad at me?" He asked once the two of them managed to light the fire. Dream wasn't always easy to anger, but he knew how to hold a grudge and George wasn't sure if he could handle Dream being angry at him for a long time.

Sapnap shook his head. "Nah. Dream can't stay mad at you. He thinks you're too pretty." George's ears turned bright red and Sapnap laughed.

"Why do you have to say it like that?"

"Aw Georgie, do you not like being called pretty?" Sapnap teased.

"Oh my god stop."

The two of them continued to bicker until well after the sun set. George was so caught up in yelling at Sapnap for his stupid kissy faces that he didn't even notice Dream returning until Sapnap shrieked.

"Dream! You scared me just standing in the dark over there!" Sapnap gasped out.

When Dream didn't laugh, George got worried. Judging from the expression on Sapnap's face, he was worried too. "Dream are you okay?" The younger man asked.

"Sapnap. George I-" Dream's voice sounded wrecked, like he had been crying for hours. George leapt to his feet and strode over to his friend, Sapnap close behind him, but he stopped short when Dream flinched. "I'm sorry I-I'm such a bad friend I just-" Dream cut himself off with a strangled sound, obviously frustrated that he wasn't able to properly explain how he felt. His hands were shaking and George wanted to grab the blonde by the shoulders and shake some sense into him because this wasn't the Dream he knew. The Dream he knew was always brave, always unaffected,

always the steady rock that kept him and Sapnap balanced. Dream without a confident grin was just *unnerving*.

"You're not a bad friend." George reassured him, trying and failing to keep the worry from his voice.

Dream responded with a hollow laugh. "You can't be friends with someone you don't know anything about." George flinched at his own words being thrown back at him. Dream's hands stopped shaking and he took a deep breath like he had just decided something important, but his shoulders were hunched so far over that George and Sapnap were almost taller than him.

Dream reached towards his face and George gasped, realizing what his masked friend was about to do. It felt wrong somehow. Seeing Dream curled up into himself, so resigned. It made George sick to his stomach and his hand shot out and grabbed Dream by the wrist, stopping him from taking off his mask.

"Stop." George whispered hoarsely. Sapnap reached out and gripped Dream's other hand securely in his own.

"Why? You always talk about seeing my face, so now that I want to show you, you're telling me to stop?" Dream snarled, but the effect was ruined by how much he was shaking.

George started tracing soothing circles on Dream's wrist with his thumb. "I'm stopping you because you don't really want to show us." He replied. George was surprised by how steady and calm his own voice sounded. He could feel Dream staring at him from behind the mask and Sapnap's eyes boring into the side of his head. George didn't care. He wanted nothing more than for the blonde to just relax.

"Dream it's okay." Sapnap whispered and pulled both his friends back towards the fire. "We understand. You never have to show us your face if you don't want to."

Dream was still so tense and Sapnap struggled to manoeuvre the taller man into a sitting position on the ground. Sapnap was always much better at comforting than George and it was painful for him to watch without knowing how to help.

Eventually Sapnap got Dream to sit with him in front of a fallen log, huddled together so he could cuddle with the masked man while George stayed standing a short distance away, unsure of himself. Sapnap made a face at him over the top of Dream's head that screamed 'this is your fault now fix it' that spurred George into action.

George scrambled to Dream's side, moving purely on instinct at that point. He settled beside his friend so close that he was practically in his lap. His shoulder brushed against Sapnap's arm where it was wrapped around Dream's shoulders. Dream still felt tense under George's fingers and he tried to imagine how the blond was feeling. Was it because of what he had said? Dream probably didn't believe them when they said it was okay for Dream to keep secrets, maybe he really thought that George didn't trust him. How was he supposed to say that he had only been trying to lash out, to make Dream react in some way other than his usual smug grin? He wanted Dream to be frustrated, but now that George was seeing this side of Dream, he felt more guilt than ever.

"I'm so sorry Dream. I didn't mean it." George whispered. The masked man relaxed slightly before tensing back up and George bit his lip anxiously. "You don't believe me?" Sapnap flicked him on the ear, obviously not impressed with George's efforts. When Dream said nothing, George took that as an answer. Luckily, he knew there was one thing he could say to get Dream to believe him.

"I love you Dream." George said, his heart feeling lighter than it had in years. Sapnap inhaled sharply, most likely in surprise. They all knew George loved them in some way, but he had never admitted it out loud in all five years that he had known them. He once admitted to Sapnap that he wouldn't because it felt too important to say unless he was sure that he meant it and right now, George had never been more sure of anything in his life.

And Dream— well Dream *melted*. "I love you." George said again. "I love you. I love Sapnap. I love being your friend. I don't care if you never tell me another thing about yourself because I love you. I love both of you more than I've loved and will love anything else."

Dream wrapped his arms tightly around George and pressed his face into his shoulder. He could feel the edge of Dream's mask digging into his collarbone, but he couldn't care less. Not when Dream was laughing, sounding happier than George had ever heard him. "I love you too." Dream murmured into George's shoulder.

"Aww, I love you guys too." Sapnap cooed, grinning at George like a maniac over the top of Dream's head. It was easy for the three of them to dissolve into fits of laughter.

When George fell asleep that night, he was comfortably tangled up in the arms of the two people he loved.

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"It's still kind of creepy that you don't sleep and spend all night staring at us." Sapnap interrupted the silence that had fallen over them. Both George and Dream silently reached over and smacked him. "Ow!"

Some things never change.

# I Stole It First!

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap meets Dream.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sapnap was way in over his head.

When he arrived in Arctis a few days ago, his plan had been to spend a couple of days pickpocketing and then hightailing out of town before he got caught. But then he heard rumors about a local noble acquiring an incredibly valuable emerald. Sapnap was a thief at heart and he couldn't resist.

It was relatively easy to break into the noble's estate; just hop the fence, melt the lock on a window, and sneak around until he found where the emerald was kept. Well it turns out the last step was a lot more difficult than Sapnap thought. He was currently in the middle of a hallway with guards approaching from both sides and time was running short.

Working fast, Sapnap moved to the closest door and slipped inside, letting the door close behind him. It was pitch black in the room, the only light coming from underneath the door. As the guards drew closer, Sapnap instinctively scrambled backwards away from the door and directly into someone's chest.

Sapnap shrieked. Probably the worst thing to do while trespassing on an influential noble's highly guarded estate, but a hand clamped over his mouth, muffling the sound before the guards could hear. All Sapnap could think was *Shit, I'm caught* and he began to struggle in the stranger's grip.

"Shh!" The stranger whispered directly into Sapnap's ear. Sapnap stilled. Now that he thought about it, the stranger obviously didn't want to get caught either. There wasn't exactly another explanation for why he was also hiding in a dark empty room.

Sapnap bit the stranger's hand. "Ow! What the hell?" He whispered harshly and let go.

"What the hell?" Sapnap whirled around to face him, not that it did anything to help with it being too dark to see the stranger's face, "*What the hell?* That should be my line!"

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were trying to get caught with your girly screams."

Sapnap's face turned bright red. "Wha- My screams are not girly!"

"Yes they are." The stranger replied, even in the dark Sapnap could tell he was smirking.

Sapnap was about to reply when he noticed a commotion outside. "Sound the alarm! The emerald is missing!" Guards were shouting and running up and down the halls. "Search every room until



the thief is found!"

"Uh oh." The stranger said and Sapnap's eyes widened in realization.

"Wait a minute, you're trying to steal the emerald too?"

He snorted. "There isn't any trying about it."

No way. He already stole the emerald? "You already stole it?" Sapnap didn't need to see to know that the stranger was grinning. He just seemed like that much of a smug bastard.

"Maybe~" He replied and Sapnap's mood soured.

"Are you kidding me?" Sapnap gave the stranger a hard shove to the chest in anger. He got the impression that he could have stayed still if he wanted to, but stumbled back just for Sapnap's benefit. It only made him more irritated with the stranger. He stomped angrily towards the stranger to give him a piece of his mind, but tripped and instead went sprawling to the floor. The stranger laughed and Sapnap just wanted to kill him.

When he finally got to his feet, Sapnap had completely lost his sense of the space around him. The stranger could be two inches or two yards away in any direction and the black haired boy wouldn't be able to tell. A snarl formed on Sapnap's face "I hate y-"

The door slammed open, suddenly illuminating the room and blinding Sapnap. Once he could see again, Sapnap caught sight of a masked man in a green coat standing close to the door. Everything was still for less than a second, both guards and thieves frozen in shock. Sapnap and the masked man from being found and the guards from actually finding something.

"Thieves!" The guard shouted and everything kicked off. Sapnap's fingers were already buzzing with magic. He ignited the room before anyone managed to move a muscle, trapping the masked stranger next to the guards. *Sorry*, he thought towards the stranger, but better him rotting in a jail cell than Sapnap.

The masked stranger didn't go down without a fight. He managed to take down five guards with his bare hands before becoming overwhelmed. Sapnap didn't stick around much longer than that and escaped through the window.

~

It was just before sunset the next day while Sapnap was stalking up and down alleys keeping his head down when he heard something that caught his interest. Considering how well interesting rumours had panned out for him lately, he should have known better, but Sapnap wasn't exactly known for his smarts. "Did you hear? They finally caught that masked bastard!" The words floated out of a nearby window and into the alley.

Sapnap paused for a moment. He only knew of one masked bastard and he had met him only the night before. Against his better judgement, he stepped closer, taking refuge just below the open window where he could hear best.

"He was definitely a prick, I mean he was a murderer and a thief! Having all of us living in terror, afraid to leave our homes!" Sapnap frowned. He didn't get a chance to really get to know the masked man, but he didn't seem the murdering type. Maybe there were two masked men that had been caught recently? "That mask always gave me the chills."

"The one with the child's drawing of a smile?" Nevermind, it was definitely the same guy.

"Yeah. I know it sounds silly, but having a man wearing something so childlike just feels so sinister, you know?" Whoever they were, Sapnap definitely thought they had a point, but still, he couldn't shake the feeling that they were wrong about him being a murderer. "Anyways, they're going to execute him at dawn. Want to go watch?"

Sapnap gasped. He was going to be executed? "Of course he's going to be executed, he's a criminal you idiot." The pyromancer muttered to himself. Still, he couldn't shake the memory of cutting off the masked man's escape or the guilt that came with it. Sapnap continued down the alley lost in thought. Should he do something? What could he do anyways? He was just some thirteen year old punk.

By now, it was fully dark out and Sapnap found himself standing in front of the jailhouse. He was going to do something, wasn't he? "I'm an idiot." Sapnap told himself and then got to work.

~

He set the building next to the jail on fire. It was a brilliant plan. Start a fire to draw the guards outside and then sneak into the building and break the masked man out of his cell. Then they would be even and Sapnap would be absolved of his guilt.

But then he set the building on fire.

This wasn't really a problem, but Sapnap just wasn't used to committing arson so blatantly, even for a pyromancer. Sapnap raced through the halls of the jail, peaking into every cell as he went, searching for that familiar head of blond hair. Eventually he found the masked thief at the end of a row of cells on the top floor.

Looking at him made Sapnap wince. The masked man was chained to the wall of his cell and had very visibly been beaten by the guards. He could see blood dripping to the floor of the cell from underneath the stranger's mask. Sapnap was pretty sure it was from a broken nose, but without a closer look, he couldn't be sure.

"They let you keep your mask?" Sapnap asked without thinking. The chains rattled as the blond shifted and looked up.

There was a pause while the stranger processed what he was seeing. "You!" It wasn't an accusation, but it sure sounded like one.

"Hey! Rude!"

"Rude? I didn't even insult you yet!"

"But you were going to, weren't you?"

The blond paused as he pretended to think about it. "Yeah, I was."

Sapnap rolled his eyes. "Whatever. I'm busting you out and you can insult me later."

"Why?"

"Because I'm the reason you're in here idiot!" The masked man was visibly confused, but his shoulders lost their tension, so Sapnap considered it a win. "I'm Sapnap."

"What kind of name is Sapnap?"

"You know the correct response should be, *Hi Sapnap my name is so and so!*"

"Hi Sapnap, my name is so and so!"

Sapnap levelled a glare at the stranger. "You're not funny." He only wheezed with laughter in response. "Oh well, guess you don't want me to break you out. After I went through all this effort too." Sapnap began walking slowly back the way he came.

"Wait no! Come back!" The pyromancer paused, but didn't turn around. "It's Dream. I'm Dream."

"Dream huh?" Sapnap asked, turning to face the masked man with a shit eating grin on his face. "What kind of game ass name is that?"

"It's not a name." Dream replied and Sapnap's eyebrows scrunched together in confusion. "Can you just get me out of here now? Please?"

"Oh, yeah." Sapnap turned to the lock on the cell, ready to melt it open. "Oh god I'm such an idiot!" He groaned.

As a pyromancer, Sapnap only had one flame to control, and his was currently next door doing its best to turn a building to ash. If he wanted to blast through the cell door, he would have to call back his flame. That would mean their distraction was gone and the guards would return to their posts instead of continuing to help with controlling the blaze.

"What the problem? Just pick the lock!" Dream hissed.

"I don't know how!" Sapnap replied hotly.

Dream suddenly began to look nervous. "Okay look, I have an idea, but it isn't really pleasant and I kind of need your permission first."

"Okay sure."

Dream seemed shocked. "You're not even going to ask what my idea is?"

"I don't know if you noticed, but we're working on borrowed time. Just do it before the guards get suspicious and come to check on you."

"Okay, okay, fine! Just- Could you close your eyes?"

"Sure dude." Sapnap replied and his eyes fell shut. A few seconds went by and nothing happened. "Well? Are you-"

Sapnap felt like he was punched in the gut. His limbs felt heavy and his head hurt. Distantly, he was aware of his arms moving on their own, picking the lock of the cell door.

*Dude, when did I learn to pick locks?*

*You didn't,* another voice replied in his head. Dream's voice.

*What the hell?*

Sapnap watched in fascination as his own hands opened the cell door, unlocked Dream's cuffs, and gently lowered the blonde's unconscious body to the ground. Suddenly, the fog cleared and the pain in Sapnap's head disappeared. Through the holes in the mask, he saw Dream's eyes open. *Huh. They're green.* For some reason, this was amusing.

Sapnap collapsed.

~

The smell of smoke filled Sapnap's nose as he woke up. The crackle of a fire wasn't unusual, especially for a pyromancer, but Sapnap didn't have a fire near his bed at the inn.

Sapnap bolted upright. He was in a forest laying next to a campfire, a cloak that had been tucked around him like a blanket slipped off his shoulders. A very green cloak. His eyes locked onto Dream, who was sitting on the opposite side of the fire. He looked smaller than Sapnap remembered, less like a masked man and more like a masked kid around his age.

"You're a child." Sapnap accused. He studied his fellow thief closely, noticing how his mask was pushed up slightly, revealing chapped lips that were healing from a recent beating.

Dream shrugged. "So are you."

"But you looked like a grownup!"

"Yeah." The masked boy seemed almost sullen.

"How old are you?"

"How old are *you*?"

"I asked first!"

"I asked second." Dream sounded extraordinarily smug.

Sapnap was quiet for a moment. "Fifteen." He lied.

"Liar." The blonde accused.

"Fine, fourteen!" Dream just sat there silently. "Thirteen..."

"I thought so."

Sapnap gave Dream an expectant look. "Well? Are you going to tell me how old you are?"

Dream shot Sapnap a toothy grin. "Fourteen." He replied smugly.

"You're so annoying." Dream doubled over with wheezy laughter. "It's not even that funny."

Dream continued to laugh and Sapnap pouted, crossing his arms. A thought crossed his mind and he suddenly sat up straighter. "Hey Dream, what was that thing you did? Where you made me pick the lock?" Dream's laughter died.

"It uh, it was-" Dream cleared his throat. "I kind of possessed you I guess. I know that's really weird and all, but I promise I'll never do it again, please don't be angry with me."

"Dude!" Dream flinched. "That was so cool! Can we do that again?"

"I- What?"

"Can we. Do that. Again." Sapnap repeated slowly.

"No!"

"Awww." The pyromancer pouted. "How do you possess people anyways? I thought mages could only have one type of magic and you can change your appearance too."

Dream licked his lips nervously. "I'm not a mage."

"What are you then?"

The masked boy shrugged, not because he didn't know, but because he didn't want to answer. When Sapnap didn't ask anything else, Dream stood and stretched. Before the pyromancer's eyes, in between one blink and the next, Dream turned from a fourteen year old boy into a grown man. He took his cloak from Sapnap and pulled it on. "See ya Sapnap." The masked thief turned on his heel and began to walk away.

Sapnap leapt to his feet, put out the fire with a snap of his fingers, and scrambled after Dream. "So why do you go around looking older than you are?" Dream stopped in his tracks.

"Why are you following me?"

Sapnap shrugged. "You're the only thief I met that's my age, which is cool. And I want you to possess me again so I figure if I follow you around, it'll happen eventually."

Dream stared at Sapnap in disbelief. "You're an idiot." The pyromancer just grinned.

They walked in silence for a while. "It's because people don't ask questions."

"What?"

"You asked why I choose to look like an adult. It's because people don't ask adults why they're travelling alone or whatever." Dream admitted.

Sapnap understood. He was always asked where his parents were wherever he went. "Dude that's so cool! I wish I could do that." Dream laughed.

~

"I still can't believe you got me captured. I really fucking wanted that emerald." Dream sighed.

"Oh." Sapnap laughed and reached into his pocket. "You mean this emerald?" He held it up where his new friend could see.

Dream's mouth fell open in shock. "You- What? *What?* How?"

"I totally picked your pocket once I realized you had it. Why else would I shove you?"

"I just thought you were angry!" Dream practically screeched. "I can't believe it!"

It was totally satisfying for Sapnap to finally be the one with a smug grin plastered on his face.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm not really happy with how the beginning of this chapter turned out, but I'm tired of looking at it, so here you go.

Also it is currently 3am and I did not finish editing this chapter before posting it, so that's cool.

# There Are Some Things Better Left Unknown

## Chapter Summary

This is just a short scene that I made out of a conversation I wanted to be in chapter 2, but I just couldn't seem to make it fit.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

Sapnap had a question burning a hole in his chest for weeks now. It ate at him while he and Dream walked from city to city, between meals, and late into the night until his breathing evened out and he slipped into unconsciousness. The more Sapnap thought about this question, the less he knew how to ask it. He spent hours every day staring at the simple white mask his friend wore, trying to get any indication of what Dream was thinking.

Even though it was the obvious question, Sapnap didn't give a damn about Dream's face. Given all of the other things Sapnap knew about the blonde, his face was the least mysterious. Like how Dream wasn't a mage, but could do magic and how Sapnap never had to take a turn on watch because Dream didn't need sleep. Without either of them really acknowledging it, Sapnap knew Dream wasn't human. Something about the blonde's presence made the flame under Sapnap's skin rage against his control. It made him uneasy at times, but if Dream was going to actually hurt Sapnap, he would have done it weeks ago when they first started travelling together.

No, what Sapnap really wanted to know was why Dream had been scheduled for execution. They had called him a murderer. Dream didn't seem like a murderer, but Sapnap hadn't exactly met many murderers in his life. There wasn't an easy way to ask and even if he could figure out a way to brooch the subject, he wasn't sure if he wanted to know the answer.

"What do you want?" Dream snapped. Sapnap blinked and realized he had been staring for just a moment too long. When Sapnap didn't answer, Dream continued, "You keep staring at me and something is obviously bothering you, so spit it out!"

"I-" Sapnap began. He was conflicted. What if asking him about the charges made him angry? Would he hurt him? Would he *leave* him?

He was stalling. The one thing he and Dream had in common was that neither of them did things halfway and here Sapnap was, turning into an indecisive coward, acting exactly like the type of person he hated. He couldn't see his face under the mask, but Sapnap could tell he was glaring at him.

All in then.

"Did you really kill those people? The ones they were going to execute you for?" The tension in the air cleared so fast it made Sapnap light headed. That, or Dream's glaring had been warring with Sapnap's instincts more than he realized. Either way, the masked man's presence practically evaporated.

He seemed unsure of how to answer, "I did," he replied, "Does that bother you?"

Yes. No. Maybe. Sapnap wasn't sure, not without knowing the reason.

"Why?"

Dream chuckled, or at least he tried to, it sounded like he felt defeated, which was so unlike him and his usual smug confidence, "They deserved it."

"And that's it? You murdered them because you felt disrespected? Did they bump into you and not apologize? Ignore you?" Sapnap was well aware that he was being unfair to his friend, but murder wasn't something the pyromancer could do, it wasn't like theft. You could always return something you regret stealing, but murder-- murder was *permanent*.

"No I--"

"Then why?"

Dream looked miserable. Sapnap was quickly learning that the masked man hated confrontation, which was odd, because he usually excelled at smirking and bluffing his way through any situation.

The blonde let out a ragged gasp, "which one do you want to know about?" He sounded close to crying, "because there were a lot, so which one?"

"Any of them! All of them!"

"Think you have the time for all of them? How ambitious of you." Dream finally snapped, his voice was cold, his hands were shaking. "Should I start with the mother who killed her husband and then tried to kill her son? How about the mayor who extorted the residents of his town until they were starving? Or the soldiers that tried to burn down a church that wouldn't offer them sanctuary? Which one?"

"You--"

"They deserved it," Dream sounded close to his breaking point and Sapnap was beginning to realize that the masked man cared more about his opinion than he originally thought, "I promise they deserved it."

Suddenly Sapnap didn't care about the deaths, he just wanted his friend to stop looking so defeated. So small. He didn't know how to fix the pain he had caused, so the pyromancer decided to just move on instinct.

He grabbed one of Dream's hands in his own. He pressed a gentle kiss into the blonde's palm, the rough texture of his gloves brought a harsh sensation to such a gentle act. Sapnap carefully tugged the glove off and kissed the tips of each of his fingers while Dream stared at him completely slack jawed.

"I'm sorry," Sapnap whispered, "I believe you." He laced their fingers together. They both had callouses covering their hands from years of hard work and thievery, but they still fit together perfectly.

Dream tightened his grip on Sapnap's hand and pulled him into a hug. Neither of them said anything for a long time, just enjoying the sensation of a physical comfort neither of them have had in a long time.



# It's Not a Guess if You're Right

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap is an enabler, George is an idiot, and Dream just can't stop laughing.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It started with a game of three-card Monte. George had a couple of extra coins after buying supplies in town and Sapnap goaded him into trying his luck with a few street shows of some kind.

He passed on the guy who was offering a hundred gold to whoever could beat him at arm wrestling. Dream could probably beat him considering how he had some new inhuman feat up his sleeve every other week, but George knew better than to think he could beat him. There was a fortune teller, a test of strength, a tent of curiosities, essentially every shady scam under the sun. Normally George wouldn't dare to step into an alley like this, but Sapnap was a thief and a pickpocket, so he was practically at home in this part of town. He felt safe enough to wander knowing that the pyromancer was watching his back.

In a moment of spontaneity, George chose the man with the three-year Monte setup.

"The rules are simple son, just pick the queen out of the three cards three times in a row and you win the pot," he said. His teeth were brown and rotting, but his accent was crisp and reminded George of the fellows who attended college. How a man rich enough to attend college could sink low enough to be nothing more than a con man, and he certainly was a con man, George would never know.

"That's it?" It didn't seem that hard, but given the circumstance, he most likely had a trick up his sleeve. George would have to stay on his toes.

The man, 'crooked teeth' George decided to dub him, gave a wide smile. "Two gold to play and the pot is sitting at seventeen emeralds and a few gold." George glanced over his shoulder at Sapnap, who was grinning ear to ear. He obviously was enjoying watching George get swindled, which made him all the more determined to win.

"Okay," George said with a shrug and handed over the gold.

Crooked teeth's grin was unnerving and the brunette couldn't help but feel like he made a mistake. The first round was easy enough, Crooked teeth showed him the position of the queen of hearts and a pair of sevens before beginning to shuffle them around across the table between them. He didn't shuffle them very fast and George had no problem picking out the queen.

"Good job," Crooked teeth exclaimed, "Two more and you win the pot." He said it conspiratorially with a wink, as though he was rooting for George. It was so disingenuous that it

made his skin crawl.

Crooked teeth once again showed the placement of the three cards before beginning to shuffle them around. His hands moved so fast, George could barely keep track of the queen.

"You know, you have such a strange accent, I've never heard anything like it. Where are you from?" George was so surprised by the question that he glanced away from the cards to meet Crooked teeth's eyes. The way the man smiled made George swear internally. He was obviously well practiced at getting people to lose track of the queen. George could feel Sapnap shaking with silent laughter at his back and he scowled. Hopefully his luck was good enough to pick the queen without knowing.

"I'm from Britain." George answered Crooked teeth's question bitterly.

"Sounds like a lovely place."

"Sure."

Crooked teeth stopped shuffling and gestured to the cards dramatically. "Alright, find the lady." George studied the cards for a moment, they were all identical while face down, so he would have to guess. He almost picked the card on the right, but at the last second, George's hand was drawn, almost against his will, to the card in the middle.

"That one," he said, sounding more confident than he felt. Crooked teeth looked surprised and flipped the card to reveal the queen of hearts. *Thank god*, George thought to himself.

"That's two wins! One more and you get the pot." Crooked teeth's tone didn't betray anything, but George still got the impression that not many people got two wins anyways.

Again Crooked teeth showed George the cards and again he began to shuffle them around. This time his hands moved so fast, the only thing that was letting the brunette even keep up with the speed was his trained archer's eyes. "Where is Britain anyways? I bet the weather is dreadful with how pale you look." The con man tried to distract George again, but this time the brunette wasn't falling for it.

"Hmm." George hummed, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the man. It was rude of Crooked teeth to mention his complexion like that and George could tell that if he and Sapnap weren't in the middle of a seedy alley, he would be doubled over in laughter.

Crooked teeth stopped shuffling and gestured to the cards. "Where's the lady?" He asked.

George didn't know. Even following closely with his eyes, he still managed to lose track of the queen. He would have to make another guess. No doubt there was a trick to it, otherwise the pot wouldn't have grown to several emeralds in size.

He pondered for a moment. The queen could be in the middle again, trying to trick George into thinking that he wouldn't put the queen in the same place twice, but the reverse could also be true. Thinking about it just made George's head hurt, he wasn't meant to think this much over a silly game. For a moment George wished Dream had come with them, the masked man would definitely have been able to keep track of the queen, no matter how fast Crooked teeth shuffled. Unfortunately, with Sapnap adamantly refusing to participate, George only had himself to rely on.

Not wanting to waste any more time thinking George went to point at the center card. Except he didn't. George felt that weird pull yet again and he found himself pointing directly at Crooked teeth's sleeve instead of one of the cards on the table.

"It's there," he said with complete certainty. George didn't know how he knew, but he just felt in his bones that the queen couldn't be anywhere else.

Crooked teeth's mouth fell open in shock and George heard Sapnap gasp behind him. "Well? Are you going to show me or not?" He snapped. Crooked teeth looked equal parts guilty and peeved as he rolled up his sleeve revealing a card tucked against his forearm. It was the queen of hearts.

"Lucky guess," Crooked teeth said. From the way his eyes began to dart about, George could tell he was desperately trying to find a way to get out of paying out their winnings.

Sapnap slammed his hand on the table and flashed a menacing grin. "We'll be taking our prize now." His voice left no room for argument and Crooked teeth reluctantly handed over a pouch containing the money. Sapnap made a show of counting out the emeralds to make sure they were all there. He seemed satisfied with the amount because he nodded and then grabbed George's arm, hightailing it out of the alley.

"Hey!" George tried to pull his arm free.

"Chill," Sapnap replied, "we need to get out of here before someone decides to try and mug us now that we're loaded." He let go of George's arm only to take the brunette by his hand and lace their fingers together. Sapnap kept up a quick pace, just shy of running, until they were on the outskirts of town. Dream had spent the day in the woods nearby not being a fan of populated areas during broad daylight. George figured it was probably due to whatever Dream was, but it didn't stop him from being annoyed at the masked man from time to time.

Sapnap finally slowed his pace, deeming them safe enough from muggers and thieves. "Dude! How did you do that? Even I didn't see him slip the queen into his sleeve and I'm like an expert at sleight of hand." The pyromancer was still holding George's hand, casually swinging their arms back and forth as they walked. It almost felt like they were a couple on a romantic stroll. George felt his cheeks heating and purposefully looked away from Sapnap.

"I dunno." He shrugged and he really didn't. "I just had this weird feeling and I was pointing before I knew what was happening."

"Well whatever it was, it was damn cool."

"What was cool?" George let out a shriek and both of them jumped before spotting Dream in the tree branches above them. Somehow he could tell that the masked man was staring at his and Sapnap's linked hands, making him shiver. He wanted to pull away, but Sapnap tightened his grip, almost daring Dream to say something about it.

"George won a game of find the lady! I totally would have lost if I was playing, but he practically knew where the card was before the guy finished shuffling!" Sapnap exclaimed.

"Well duh, of course George won, he's a clairvoyant." Dream replied.

George blinked. "I'm a what?"

"A clairvoyant. Did you not know?"

"I don't even know what that means!"

Dream stared at George in shock before doubling over in wheezy laughter. "I- You- I can't believe it!" Sapnap started giggling as well and leaned over to laugh into George's shoulder.

"I can't believe you're a mage and you didn't even know it! This is incredible!" Dream continued to wheeze and George had a feeling this would go on for a while.

"Okay, but what does that even mean? Clair-whatever." The brunette snapped impatiently.

Eventually Sapnap got his laughter under control enough to answer, Dream however, had fallen over and was rolling around on the forest floor as he wheezed, sounding rather uniquely like a tea kettle boiling over.

"A clairvoyant. It means you can, like, predict the future and stuff," the pyromancer replied. "Oh dude! Can you predict something? Like right now. Like will it rain tomorrow? Oh! How many fingers am I holding up?"

George could very clearly see Sapnap holding up three fingers and shot the pyromancer a flat look. "It doesn't work if you show me your hand before I guess."

Sapnap looked puzzled. "Dude, I didn't show you."

"Yes you did!"

"No George, I literally did not." George blinked and realized that Sapnap's free hand was hidden behind his back.

"Wait, are you holding up three fingers?"

Sapnap revealed his hand. He had been holding up his pinkie, ring, and middle fingers, exactly like George had seen.

"How did I know that?"

"Because you're a clairvoyant, duh."

"I'm literally not." Somehow Dream started laughing even harder.

"Yes you are! God you're so stupid!" Sapnap replied.

"There's literally no way. I would know if I'm a mage and I'm not."

"Then how did Dream know? Huh? Did you think about that?"

No, George had not thought about that. Dream was pretty much always right, to the point that whenever Dream said something with certainty, neither Sapnap or George ever felt the need to check if he was right.

George pulled his hand from Sapnap's grip. "Well then maybe I am!"

"Hey! I was holding that!"

"What? My hand?" George asked incredulously.

Sapnap made grabby motions towards him. "Yeah! Give it back!"

George hugged his hand to his chest, dodging Sapnap's hold. "No!"

Dream was still laughing. Sapnap and George were used to his fits of laughter and had unanimously decided to ignore him.

"George," Sapnap yelled, "give me your hand!"

"No!"

Sapnap sprinted at his friend, causing George to shriek and dart into the trees. Spontaneously, Dream stopped laughing and leaped to his feet. "I want to hold your hand too!" He shouted and raced after the two of them.

On the road away from town, George found himself stuck between his friends, both his hands trapped in secure grasps. Sapnap was whistling as they marched on towards wherever their next stop may be while George stared at the ground. His face was bright red in embarrassment.

"See, this isn't so bad," Dream smirked.

"Oh my god, shut UP!"

## Chapter End Notes

Lmao I changed my username once again because I am constantly undergoing an identity crisis

# Hell Week

## Chapter Summary

All it took was seven days for George to decide to follow two strangers around the world.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

Once again I would like to reiterate that Dream is NOT an adult in this chapter even though he looks like one. He can shapeshift and chooses to look like an adult because people don't ask questions.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### Day 1

George hated going to the market. It was loud, crowded, and always smelled like fish and soured potions that the local cleric somehow messed up quite explosively. If he could, he would avoid the market altogether, but George's garden was ready for planting and he needed more seeds and vegetables to fill it.

He was in the middle of haggling over some beetroot seeds when he felt a prickling sensation along his spine. George turned to try and spot what was making his skin crawl only to lock eyes with a masked man in a bright coat. He couldn't tell what color it was, either green or yellow, and he had to resist the urge to ask the shopkeep to tell him which it was.

"Are you buying or not?" The shopkeep asked, shaking George from his thoughts.

"I- yeah," George said distractedly and threw some money down on the counter without paying attention to how much he paid. The shopkeep happily packaged George's beetroot seeds and sent the brunette on his way. He probably paid too much, but George was too entranced by the masked stranger. Even with the mask, George could tell he was beautiful and he couldn't help but be drawn to him.

George tripped.

"What the hell? Watch where you're going!" Correction, George tripped over someone. He looked at them and mentally corrected himself again, George tripped over a child.

"You watch where you're going!" George snapped in response.

"Wh- Me? I wasn't even moving! You just decided to walk right into me!"

To be fair to the kid, it was probably George's fault, but there was no way in hell that he was going

to admit that. "Well then maybe you shouldn't be standing in the middle of the path!" The kid looked even more frustrated and his eyes began to glow orange. He was a pyromancer, great, and George had just managed to piss him off, also great.

"Sapnap, chill out." Both George and the kid, Sapnap, looked up at the masked man.

"He started it!"

"Yeah? And what are you going to do about it? Set everything on fire?" The masked man asked.

Sapnap visibly deflated, "No." His eyes returned to their normal black hue.

The masked man turned his gaze to George and offered a hand to help him to his feet. "I'm Dream."

George took his hand and let the blonde pull him to his feet. "What kind of name is that? A fake one?" Sapnap snickered.

"That's what I said!"

"It could be," Dream answered, completely ignoring Sapnap's remark. Sapnap scowled.

"Oh I see how it is, you take one look at the pretty British boy and his doe eyes and suddenly I'm no better than chopped liver. Me. Your best friend."

"You think I'm pretty?" George smirked.

"The prettiest." Sapnap deadpanned.

Dream started suffocating, or at least George assumed he was, and he was worried about the masked man for the few seconds it took him to realize that the sounds he was producing were laughter. "You sound ridiculous." George said.

Sapnap started laughing too.

"Hey!" Dream complained.

It was Sapnap's turn to ignore the masked man. "What's your name anyways?" He asked.

"George."

Sapnap hummed in response before turning to Dream. "Did you get it?"

"Yes Sapnap, I did." Dream sounded exasperated.

"Get what?" George asked.

"An energy potion. I finally stayed awake long enough to summon a phantom and I don't want to fall asleep before we can fight it," Dream answered.

George's eyes widened, "I'm sorry, what? You *want* to fight a phantom?"

"Yep."

"I can't believe it," George said, "I almost fell for your cool and mysterious masked man thing, but you're actually an idiot."

Sapnap burst into laughter, "I change my mind, anyone that calls Dream an idiot is the best."

"Of course I'm the best," George replied, "I'm me."

Now Dream was laughing as well.

George only rolled his eyes and turned on his heel. "Have fun!" He called over his shoulder, not wanting to stick around and have their brand of crazy rub off on him.

"See you around!" Dream called after him and George sincerely hoped he was lying.

~

## **Day 2**

Sometimes, George wondered what he had done in past lives to deserve his lot in life. "Can you not?" he asked the boy, Sapnap, in an annoyed tone.

"Can you not?" Sapnap repeated in a high pitch, mocking George's accent. He continued to trample across George's garden, pulling up carrots and potatoes that weren't fully grown, and just mostly making an ass of himself.

"You are literally so annoying."

Sapnap grinned, "Hey George."

"What?" He sighed.

"Did it hurt?"

"Sapnap I swear to god if you say when I fell from heaven I will kill you." George was completely fed up. At the moment, Sapnap was practically destroying his garden while Dream watched on, wearing a smug grin as usual. The masked man himself lounged comfortably on George's roof. George had no idea how he managed to get up there.

"Come on, just go along with it," Sapnap whined.

George took a deep breath, hoping it would grant him a modicum of extra patience. It didn't.

"Fine. Did what hurt?"

"This!" Sapnap yelled, and hit George squarely in the forehead with a carrot. George's mouth fell open in shock. Dream laughed. He laughed so hard he rolled right off the roof and landed directly on the beetroot plants George had just buried, destroying them.

"Dream!" George screeched and pushed the masked man off of his vegetables. "Oh my God. I hate you. I hate you so much right now."

"Aw, George," Dream whined, "you love us."

"I literally met you just yesterday."

"It was love at first sight." Sapnap butted in.

George scoffed and rolled his eyes, "For you maybe."

Neither Dream or Sapnap responded, just staring at George with equally dopey grins. It made him



nervous. Why? He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but despite the grins and laughter, the atmosphere felt heavy. Not suffocating, just present in a way that made George all too aware of their stares.

Suddenly Dream jumped to his feet. "Well George, It's been fun. We'll see you tomorrow!" The masked man's words came out rushed and he dragged Sapnap out of George's garden by the arm before he even had a chance to respond. He was left dumbfounded, staring at where they disappeared around the corner of his home like a lost puppy.

Without Sapnap and Dream there, George felt off kilter. He had only just met them the day before and yet their whirlwind of chaotic energy was already something George was accustomed to. The two of them rushed into and out of his life, quite literally barging into his home earlier that day with the intent of becoming his friend, with no regard for his opinion on the matter. What really confused George was how he couldn't wait to see them again tomorrow.

~

### Day 3

"George!" Dream called over the noise of the market. George was surprised that he heard the masked man when there was so much going on around him, loud haggling as an old woman argued for a decent price on mushrooms, town criers desperately trying to advertise their goods to nearby pedestrians, bells and whistles, conversations between fellow shoppers, it was a lot to ignore for George to focus completely on Dream's voice and let all other sounds fade into the background. Just seeing him made George feel lighter. He scowled anyways, just to keep Dream from thinking he cared. Based on the smug grin the blonde shot at him, he wasn't fooled one bit by George's posturing.

"Dream." George responded with a nod in place of a greeting.

"What are you doing at the market? You just went two days ago. Me and Sapnap have been looking all over town for you."

"I'm replacing all the vegetables the two of you managed to destroy before I could finish planting them."

Dream had the decency to look guilty even though George wasn't nearly as upset as he was acting. "Let me pay for them then. It was our fault."

George was taken aback. "What? No. They're my vegetables, I'm paying for them." Dream was already walking with a purposeful stride to the vegetable stall and George scrambled to keep up with him. "You can't be serious."

"How much for five of everything?" Dream asked the shopkeep, ignoring George.

"Dream!"

The shopkeep glanced nervously between Dream and George. "Ten emeralds," he said a little too quickly. Dream wasted no time pulling out a small bag that was practically bursting at the seams from his coat pockets. He produced ten emeralds from the bag and both George and the shopkeeper's eyes widened in shock. The bag still looked completely full even as Dream casually tossed around incredibly large sums of money. Hastily, the shopkeep bagged up the items Dream wanted and took the emeralds, Dream took the package of vegetables and handed it to George, his own bag of money disappeared back into his pockets.

"I can't believe you."

"What? That I would spend money on you George?"

"No idiot. I can't believe you would pay ten emeralds for exactly fifteen vegetables and some seeds." George had been so shocked by the amount of money Dream had that he hadn't realized the masked man was being hustled until it was already too late.

Dream tilted his head curiously, "wait, then how much should I have paid?"

"I don't know, a couple of gold, maybe an emerald or two at the most."

"Why would he tell me the price was ten emeralds then?"

George blinked in shock, "Oh my god, you are actually an idiot."

He was about three seconds away from lecturing Dream about how markets worked when Sapnap purposefully bumped into George's shoulder and fell in step beside them. "Hey guys, what's up?"

"What's up? *What's up?* Dream just paid ten emeralds for a handful of vegetables and seeds!"

Sapnap blinked and slowly turned to look at the blonde. "Is this true Dream?"

Dream ducked his head, avoiding the pyromancer's eyes.

"Wh- *What?* Dream have you never been to a market? You're supposed to haggle! You should have only paid like half that!"

"*Half?* Are you joking?" George was baffled, just completely astounded by their combined idiocy. "How do you have so much money when you both seem to pay way too much for everything?"

"Well how much would you have paid then George?"

George wanted to throw his hands up in the air, but he didn't want to ruin the vegetables Dream overpaid for by being so careless with them. "Like six gold! Maybe even five!"

"Wh- *Five?*" Sapnap exclaimed, "are you serious?"

"Yes!"

"Dream we're both idiots." George hoped they felt a little foolish. The exchange rates between gold and emeralds were a finicky thing, no two cities had the same equivalence, but gold was always worth less than emeralds. In George's village, an emerald was worth the same as eleven gold.

Dream only laughed in response.

~

## **Day 4**

"Dream, why are you travelling with a kid?"

"What?" Dream turned away from where he had been watching Sapnap try to catch a stray cat to look at George in surprise.

"Sapnap. He's so much younger than you." George suddenly felt embarrassed to be asking and he started kicking at the dirt to look like he didn't care about the answer. It was odd though, that a masked man who looked around George's age, maybe a little older, was travelling with a kid that looked about fourteen years old.

Dream hummed, "He's not though." He said it with such finality that George was taken aback.

"What does that even mean?"

He shrugged, not answering. George was incredibly frustrated with the answer, but he knew for a fact that no matter how much he pushed, the masked man wouldn't answer any further. For the first time since he met him, the mask truly felt like the barrier it was. Dream wasn't a new friend that George made over the past few days, he was a stranger.

Sensing that Dream wouldn't be talking about anything for a while, George decided to go and save the poor stray cat from Sapnap's antics.

~

## **Day 5**

George spotted Sapnap sitting by himself on the grassy hill near the edge of town with no Dream in sight. It was unusual because the two of them were practically attached at the hip. Did something happen? Cautiously, George approached Sapnap and sat next to him in the grass. He could tell that Sapnap had been crying.

"Are you okay?" He asked in a soft tone.

Sapnap looked away and wiped at his face. "I'm fine," he lied.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"There's nothing to talk about!" He snapped.

George hummed and looked away from the pyromancer. The sun was setting in the distance and it was a beautiful sight. George knew that his colorblindness kept him from seeing its full beauty, but it was still an incredible view. An iron golem shuffled around nearby, its metal joints groaned with every step, and George knew they wouldn't have to worry about the approaching night.

"My parents died." Sapnap admitted quietly.

George felt for the younger boy, his own parents were buried next to the church down the road.  
"I'm sorry."

"It's fine, it was a long time ago."

"But?"

Sapnap glared at George. "But what?"

"I don't know," George shrugged, "I just thought it sounded like you had more to add. Why else would you be crying?"

"I'm not crying." Sapnap mumbled.

George snorted.

"I'm not!" He snapped and sprawled out so he was laying on the ground staring up at the clouds. "It's just that Dream doesn't understand. He doesn't get it and he gets mad when he can't stop me from being upset instead of just letting me be upset!"

"Oh." Something clicked in George's head and he had a realization. "It was today, wasn't it? That your parents died. Well not *today* today, but it's the anniversary, right?"

Sapnap covered his eyes with his arm, "Yeah, it is." His voice cracked and George could feel his own heart break for him.

"Tell me about them."

"What?" Sapnap removed his arm to send George a confused look.

George licked his lips nervously. He wasn't great at comforting people and he was scared that he was going to say the wrong thing and make Sapnap more upset, but he couldn't leave the pyromancer by himself like this. It felt wrong. "They were your parents, they had to be something special to raise you. I want to know what they were like."

Sapnap sat up suddenly and leaned into George's space to stare at his eyes. George desperately wanted to look away, Sapnap's gaze was just so *intense* it made his skin crawl. He must have found what he was looking for because the younger boy pulled back and smiled softly.

"My mom was a librarian. She was more thorough at collecting books than any other librarian I've ever met and our house was stacked from floor to ceiling with hundreds of books. When we ran out of room in our house, she convinced the neighbors to help dig out a cellar that she could store even more books in. And after that was full, they helped build another room next to the kitchen, and then again for a second story."

"And they helped? Just like that?"

"Well yeah," Sapnap shrugged like it was obvious. "People just liked her so much that they would do just about anything she asked."

George couldn't imagine liking anyone in his town enough to help them with something as difficult as doubling the size of a house, especially not for free. "She must have been incredible then, to have so many people wanting to help her." Although, looking at Sapnap, a boy that George hardly knew, maybe he did understand. Normally George avoided emotional situations like the plague, and yet here he was, of his own free will, trying his best to comfort the pyromancer.

"Yeah. She was."

"And your dad?"

"He was a pyromancer," Sapnap's chest puffed up, "like me!" He was obviously proud to have something like that in common with his dad and it made George smile. "He was really bad at it though. My mom said that when they first met, she was still an apprentice scribe. He came into the library looking for a book and while she was helping him, he accidentally set the book she was copying from on fire! He was so freaked out about it too and couldn't calm down enough to put out the fire. My mom just took an empty bowl and placed it upside down over the flame until it went out."

"Was she a pyromancer too?"

"No. She read in a book once that fire eats air to survive, so when it can't get any it will starve and

die out. At least that's what she told me."

George frowned. "I guess that makes sense."

"My dad was crying and apologizing for ruining my mom's work and she just laughed and told him he would have to buy her dinner to make up for it. They went out to dinner three times before my dad realized they were dates."

"He sounds like an idiot."

Sapnap's smile dimmed and he looked down at his hands in his lap. "Yeah he probably was."

"What else?" George pressed.

Sapnap didn't answer for a few seconds, George wasn't sure he was going to answer at all until he opened his mouth again. "My mom was really good at card tricks, apparently it was from years of working with paper, but I think that was a lie."

"Why?"

"Well she taught them to me, and they were more about tricking people than actually doing anything with the cards. Plus she could do it with other stuff too."

George didn't get it. "What do you mean?"

Sapnap reached over and flicked George on the forehead.

"Ow! What was that for?" George asked, rubbing the sore spot and hoping he wouldn't be left with a mark. Sapnap shrugged and then showed George his hands which were now filled with things from George's pockets. A flint, a few pieces of gold, some leftover beetroot seeds, but what really got George's attention was seeing his glasses which now perched neatly on the end of Sapnap's nose. "How the hell did you do that? I didn't even notice you taking those off my face!" He asked and swiped the shades from Sapnap's head.

Sapnap shrugged, "The same way you do card tricks. Misdirection and sleight of hand."

"You're a slimy little thief!"

"I hope so, otherwise the bounty on my head would be really awkward."

"Oh my god, you're actually a thief." George's eyes widened in realization, "Is that why you and Dream have so much money?"

Sapnap laughed. "Yeah probably."

"Jeez, I'm sure your mom is proud." George replied, making Sapnap snort.

"Probably not, but my dad might be." George gave Sapnap a confused glance. "He always loved it when my mom did card tricks. Or anything involving sleight of hand really. My mom wasn't a mage, but he said that the card tricks were special because it was proof that my mom was magic anyways. Then he would start saying even more mushy romantic crap and I would stop listening."

"They really loved each other then."

"Yeah."

“They loved you too I bet.”

“Yeah.” Sapnap sounded wistful. George didn’t blame him.

The two of them sat in silence as the sun finished setting and once the stars were out and the only light was coming from the village behind them and the moon in the sky, George stood up and offered Sapnap a hand. “Come on. I’m making rabbit stew for dinner and could use help chopping vegetables.”

Sapnap looked unsure. “I should wait for Dream. He ran off after I yelled at him.”

“Fuck Dream. He’ll come find you when he gets back.” George didn’t know Dream very well, but even he could see that the masked man wouldn’t leave Sapnap alone for very long. Sapnap nodded, convinced, and took George’s hand. If Sapnap started crying on the way to George’s home, the brunette didn’t comment on it. If he was crying too hard to help chop vegetables, George pretended he didn’t see. He just made the rabbit stew to the best of his ability, just like his own parents used to make for him before they died, and hoped it was enough to ease Sapnap through his grief.

Later, once they had both eaten and Sapnap had fallen asleep on his couch, a timid knock came from the door. It was Dream, looking both sheepish and worried.

“He’s asleep on the couch,” George whispered and opened the door wider to let the masked man in, “don’t wake him. He needs to rest.”

Dream nodded and stepped into George’s home. When he saw Sapnap sleeping peacefully with tear stains on his cheeks, he took off his bright colored coat and his boots and climbed onto the couch next to him. The blonde pulled his friend into his chest in a tight hug and if he started whispering apologies into Sapnap’s hair, if tears started falling from underneath the mask, George would never tell. He just closed himself into his own bedroom to give the two friends some privacy until sleep overcame him.

~

## Day 6

George awoke with a large mass landing directly on his chest. “Wake up!”

“Seriously what the hell Sapnap?” George shrieked, pushing the younger boy off of him. While he was glad to see Sapnap in high spirits after the night before, he did not appreciate the rude wake up call. He threw his pillow at him for good measure before curling up under his blankets once again.

“Dream made pancakes moron, but I guess you don’t want any.”

George’s eyes flew open. *Pancakes?* He hadn’t eaten pancakes since he was a little kid. Suddenly the smell of the home cooked breakfast filled his nose and George’s mouth started to water. “Fine. Fine! I’m up!” He rolled out of bed and directly on top of Sapnap.

“Ow! George! What the hell?” Sapnap groaned.

George just grinned at him. “Now you know how it feels. Good luck getting any breakfast before I finish it all!” He jumped up and sprinted for the kitchen.

“Oh hell no!” Sapnap was right on his tail, shouting as he ran.

George barrelled directly into Dream's chest. The man didn't even flinch at the sudden collision, meanwhile George was sprawled out on the floor. Both Dream and Sapnap burst into laughter. "Don't laugh at me! Help me up!" He made grabbing motions at the two until they reluctantly pulled George to his feet. "I was promised pancakes, where are they?"

Dream snorted. "They're on the table. We were waiting for you so we could start eating."

The three of them sat at George's kitchen table, which was really only meant for two, so it was a tight squeeze, and they began to stack pancakes onto their plates. George was starving. It wasn't even until just now, with the delicious smelling food in front of him, that he realized how hungry he actually was.

On his third bite, George noticed that Sapnap and Dream weren't eating and that they were just staring at him with equally guilty expressions. "What? Did you poison it or something?"

"No!" Both Dream and Sapnap answered quickly.

"Well then what's wrong?"

"We uh- Well-" Dream began.

"We're leaving tomorrow." Sapnap finished.

George put down his fork. "Oh." He felt a bit hollow knowing that after tomorrow, Dream and Sapnap wouldn't be in his life anymore. They made it exciting and fun and for the first time since his parents died, George had been looking forward to waking up each day. That all changed if they were leaving. It didn't even make any sense, George barely knew them, in fact he had only met them a few days ago.

But it made sense.

They were travellers. They were always going to leave and in the back of his mind, George knew that, but he didn't think it would be happening so soon.

"We already stayed in town way longer than we planned and it isn't exactly safe for us to stay in one place for too long." Dream explained.

"Right," George replied, "you're wanted criminals."

Dream turned to Sapnap who suddenly looked even more guilty. "You told him?" He shouted.

"It was an accident?"

"I can't believe this." The blonde sighed. "Yes, we're wanted criminals. We were only going to stop for one day to get supplies and then leave."

"What changed?" George asked. Sapnap and Dream looked at each other and George felt distinctly left out of whatever silent conversation they were having. "Why did you stay?" He pressed again.

"You." Sapnap replied. "We met you."

"Oh."

George was glad he wasn't alone in feeling the connection between them. If he had been the only one feeling this strange sense of attachment, he didn't know what he would do. That didn't change

the fact that they needed to go. George glanced around his small home and suddenly the past few years started making sense. He had been slowly selling his things until all he had were essentials, there was almost nothing in his home of value, and everything that mattered to George could be carried in a single bag. Maybe it was meant to be.

“Can I come with you?” Both Dream and Sapnap looked shocked, they definitely didn’t expect George to want to leave everything behind for two people he had met less than a week ago.

“What?”

“I’m serious. I’m going with you.” This time George said it more forcefully. He wasn’t going to be argued with.

“But what abo-” Sapnap began to protest.

“No.” George was sure. He didn’t know why, but without realizing it, he had made his home ready to leave. He had pulled away from his friends, stopped speaking to his neighbors, reduced his whole world into a travel sized bag. “I’m going and you can’t stop me.”

Dream grinned at Sapnap. “He’s going and we can’t stop him.”

~

## **Day 7**

“Beckerson is a terrible name for a fish!” Sapnap yelled.

George sneered. “You’re only saying that because I agreed it was an okay name!”

“I am not!”

“Yes you are!”

“Children please. It’s just a fish.” Dream said between wheezy laughter. The three of them had stopped at the river just outside of George’s village to fill their water skins before they went on their way. They had managed to catch a fish in an abandoned bucket while they inevitably messed around in the water.

“George is literally older than you.” Sapnap replied without missing a beat.

George looked at Sapnap and then began studying Dream. The masked man definitely looked older than George, but Sapnap sounded so sure that he was younger. “I am?”

Dream glared at Sapnap and pushed George into the river, causing him to knock over the bucket with Beckerson inside it, setting the poor fish free.

“George! You let Beckerson go!” Sapnap shrieked before George grabbed him by the leg and pulled him into the river too. The two of them began to wrestle, trying to push each other’s heads under water while Dream doubled over with laughter. Sapnap paused. “You know, Dream looks awfully dry.” He remarked to George.

George grinned in response, grabbing the discarded bucket. “You gonna hold him down?”

“Yep.”

The two of them sprung out of the water, surprising Dream into stumbling backwards. Sapnap



tackled the taller boy to the ground and George dumped the bucket over the both of them. Dream pushed Sapnap off of him and wiped the water from his face. “Oh, it’s on now.” He grinned.

Sapnap and George barely had time to grab their bags and sprint down the trail away from George’s village before Dream was after them. George never looked back.

## Chapter End Notes

This chapter took way longer than I wanted it too because GOD DAMN I kept having more ideas and next thing I knew it was twice the length I had planned. Oh well

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# You're an Idiot

## Chapter Summary

During a stop in a city for supplies, Dream realizes he loves Sapnap and George as more than just friends.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Three rules.” George said seriously. “No stealing, murdering, conning, bribing, arson, or nefarious and illegal acts, you two already have high enough bounties on your heads as it is.” Dream shrugged, he figured it was a fair enough rule. While Sapnap and Dream didn’t mind being wanted criminals, George did care, so to keep George from getting his own bounty, Dream always avoided doing anything illegal when the brunette was around.

“Okay, but like, what about if I borrow something and-”

“No Sapnap. No borrowing either.”

“Why do you always have to be such a party pooper George?” Sapnap groaned.

George shook his head. “Rule two is don’t get recognized. We need supplies so if we get run out of town before I finish shopping then we’re screwed until we reach Bolson.” Bolson was about a two weeks journey away through a desert. Even with Dream being an incredibly skilled hunter, there was no way he could catch enough rabbits to feed the three of them for two weeks straight.

Sapnap sneezed showering sparks onto the ground in front of him. He sniffled and rubbed his nose. Come to think of it, Dream thought he had been breathing strangely during the night.

“Sapnap do you have a cold?” He asked, worried.

“I’m fine,” he replied, waving off his concern. Dream was still concerned. Mages were delicate, at least more delicate than he was, and if Sapnap was sick and decided to push himself, his illness could end up being a lot more serious.

George also gave Sapnap a worried look, but chose to continue anyway. “The last rule is don’t get arrested. Got it?” Dream and Sapnap both nodded obediently. If George wasn’t worried enough about Sapnap to make him rest, then he wouldn’t worry too much either. George knew more about the limits of the human body than Dream did. After all, he actually had one.

The walk into the city of Peltragow was quieter than usual. Dream was too busy thinking to bring up any of their usual banter and Sapnap just looked too tired to argue with George as he usually would. If it weren’t for the pyromancer’s occasional sneezes and George’s humming, the walk would be dead silent.

Sapnap sneezed again, creating another shower of sparks.

“Are you sure you’re okay Sapnap? Maybe you should stay and get some rest.” Dream suggested.

Sapnap rolled his eyes. “I told you, I’m fine. It’s just some sniffles.”

“Okay. If you say so.”

When they reached the city gates, George turned right and made a beeline for the market. After he found out how terrible Dream and Sapnap were at haggling, he forbade them from doing the shopping themselves. It worked out pretty well since he was also the only one without wanted posters and could buy supplies in heavily guarded towns without the threat of arrest.

Sapnap broke left, which wasn’t unusual. The pyromancer tended to do his own thing whenever they reached a new town and only really stuck with George whenever they were in a city with high rates of crime. Criminals know how to spot each other and Sapnap always used that to his advantage when watching George’s back. Peltragow was a relatively crime free city, so George was perfectly safe to go on his own.

The problem was that Dream didn’t know who to follow. George was going to need help carrying the supplies he purchases, but the masked man was worried about his sick friend. After a moment of hesitation, Dream decided to follow Sapnap, but it was a moment too long. The pyromancer had disappeared into the crowd. Dream knew it would be a pain in the ass to track him down, he was too good at slipping tails, including Dream.

Scowling, Dream turned back towards the market. He would just have to wait until Sapnap wanted to be found.

The market was busy, busier than any market Dream had been in at least, and it took him a minute to spot George in the crowd. The brunette was in an intense discussion with a merchant who was selling things out of the back of his cart. He threw back his head and laughed at something the merchant said. His eyes were practically glowing with amusement. Suddenly, George locked eyes with him from across the market. It reminded the blonde so much of the first time they met in the market in George’s hometown. George smiled before returning to his conversation with the merchant and Dream found himself struggling to breathe. He was struck with the urge to wade through the crowded market and kiss him right there for the world to see.

Wait, kiss him? *This can’t be happening*, Dream thought desperately, *I can’t be in love with one of my best friends*.

Dream fled.

He wasn’t even sure where he had gone, just that when Dream was finally aware of his surroundings again, he was too far to hear the sounds of the market anymore. Dream came to a stop in the middle of the road. There were very few people around and Dream felt safe enough to privately freak out about the realization that he was in love with George.

Should he tell him? What if he didn’t feel the same way? Maybe he should tell Sapnap, he always knew what to do about human emotions. For some reason the thought of telling Sapnap made Dream feel sick to his stomach. Was it nerves?

Suddenly, A large moving object barrelled directly into Dream’s chest. A familiar large object.

“Sapnap, what the hell?” He asked, looking down at his friend with concern.

“Run!” Sapnap shouted, tugging on Dream’s arm. He didn’t need to be told twice. Dream fell in step behind the pyromancer and let his awareness spread out around them to try and gauge the

danger. There was a large group of people following them, the sounds of shouting and heavy footsteps in iron boots, and in the distance Dream could sense the smell of smoke and heat of a large fire.

A fire. Dream grabbed Sapnap's arm and tugged him into an alley away from prying eyes. "You didn't." He said, hoping desperately that he was wrong. Sapnap didn't say anything, which was a dead giveaway. "Sapnap! No arson was literally the first rule! How did you set a building on fire already?"

"I don't know Dream, it's almost like I start fires when I sneeze." Just to prove the point, the pyromancer sneezed again, setting Dream's coat on fire. The two of them hastily patted out the fire before it could do any serious damage.

"Then why did you come with us?" Dream was panicking. They were going to get caught. They were going to get *arrested*. He didn't want to be panicking, normally panicking wasn't his thing, normally Dream wasn't affected by nerves, but right now he was definitely panicking.

"Because I wanted to! What are you, my mom?"

"No, I'm the idiot that has to get your dumb ass out of town without getting spotted because you decided to sneeze on someone's house!"

"Well for your information, I sneezed on a bank, not a house." Sapnap replied.

Dream wanted to bash his own face into the wall. "I don't know how to tell you that is actually worse."

"Why?"

"Because there are more guards at a bank, *that's why!*" Dream shouted.

"They're over here!" Dream and Sapnap's heads both snapped towards the opening of the alley where a city guard was pointing at them. They both swore and sprinted further down the alley before they could get caught.

"For the record," Sapnap called over the sounds of shouting guards, "I blame you for this."

"How is it my fault?"

"Well I can't exactly blame George because he isn't here." Sapnap was grinning as they turned the corner and came face to face with George who was carrying an armful of supplies.

"Blame me for what?" The brunette asked.

Four guards turned the corner behind them, "There they are!" One of them shouted.

George's mouth fell open in shock. "You didn't."

"Failed step one!" Dream sang cheerfully.

"Surprise!" Sapnap said in an equally enthusiastic voice.

Dream and Sapnap grabbed George's arms and pulled him into a sprint next to them. George let out an annoyed cry as he was forced to drop their recently purchased supplies, but didn't bother arguing. They turned a corner and spotted guards. They turned back and spotted more guards. The three of them kept turning down different alleys and streets, desperately trying to make it to

the city gates, but they kept running into guards. At this rate they wouldn't make it out of the city.

“Okay George, now is the perfect time to figure out how to control your clairvoyance!” Sapnap yelled as they doubled back from yet another wrong turn.

George made a face. He had only learned he was a mage a few weeks before and his control was definitely spotty. In fact Dream had spent the whole day before making fun of the brunette for being unable to tell the difference between what he was seeing with clairvoyance and what was actually happening. “Um, that way!” He pointed at an alley further down the road.

The three of them rounded the corner only for Dream to barrel into the chest of an iron golem. All of them, including the golem, froze. Then the golem swung its arms around, aiming directly for Dream's head.

Dream ducked under the golem's arms while George and Sapnap dodged around him. “Nice going George, now we're being chased by a golem too!”

“Well what did you expect? I don't even know what I'm doing!” George shrieked and ducked down just in time to avoid the golem's backswing. They made it past the golem, but it was hot on their heels with what felt like the entire city guard not far behind. Dream rounded the next corner first, only to stop in his tracks. It was a dead end. Sapnap and George both crashed into his back and frantically tried to get him to keep moving, only to notice the dead end for themselves.

“Now what?” Sapnap asked.

Dream frantically scanned the area for a way out. There had to be some way for the three of them to get to the city gates safely. “There!” He spotted a door that almost blended perfectly into the surrounding wall. They wasted no time throwing open the door and stumbling inside.

Dream slammed the door shut and pushed his full weight against it to keep it closed. “How does someone who can literally see the future have the worst luck?” He grunted with effort as the golem began trying to beat the door down. The room was some kind of storage room filled with bales of hay, wooden chests, and several bolts of various fabrics.

“Shut up!” George snapped in response. His cheeks were pink in embarrassment and Dream wanted to kiss him for it.

Sapnap sneezed, creating sparks.

“Sapnap I swear to god if you set this room on fire I'm going to strangle you.” George pointed a finger into the pyromancer's face.

Sapnap grinned, “Sounds kinky.”

The door frame was beginning to crack under the abuse of the golem. “If you guys could stop flirting for two seconds and find a way out of here before the golem gets in and grinds us into pulp, that would be very much appreciated!” Dream spoke through gritted teeth.

Sapnap and George scrambled around the room to look for something that could help. Dream could only close his eyes and focus on keeping the door from being turned into splinters.

“Dream, Move!” Sapnap shouted. Dream opened his eyes to see the pyromancer standing in the middle of the room, George just a few steps behind him.

Move? He was the only thing stopping the golem from coming inside, why would he move?

“What?”

“Just do it!” So Dream did. He dove to the side, tucking and rolling until he hit the wall of the room. He looked up just in time to see the golem burst into the room. At the same time, the temperature in the room rose by several hundred degrees as a giant flame erupted from Sapnap’s entire body and then blasted a hole through the golem’s chest.

The crowd of guards that had been behind the golem took off running. No pyromancer was supposed to be that powerful, and yet Sapnap had somehow managed to turn himself into a human bomb. The only light in the room came from the dying embers of the fire and Sapnap’s own glowing eyes. He looked terrifying. He looked incredible.

*Oh, Dream realized, I’m not in love with one of my best friends. I’m in love with both of them.*

“That was awesome!” George cheered.

Dream had to agree. “How did you do that?”

“One of the chests had potions of resist fire.” Sapnap said as though that explained everything. When both Dream and George still looked confused, he elaborated. “Pyromancers can only control one flame, which is inside of them. If a pyromancer drinks a potion of resist fire, then they expel that flame from their body. Violently. Which reminds me, I’m basically a regular human until the potion wears off, so don’t ask me for a light.”

Sapnap helped Dream to his feet and pulled the masked man into a hug. After about half a second, he let go of Dream with one arm to make a grabbing motion at George. The brunette scoffed, but complied with Sapnap’s unspoken demand, joining them in a group hug. Holding onto his two closest friends, Dream’s heart felt like it was going to burst. He was torn between never wanting to let this go and wanting so much *more*.

Dream spoke before he even realized his mouth was open.

“I- I think I’m in love with you guys. Like really in love. As more than just friends.” Dream admitted quietly. George and Sapnap stepped back to stare at Dream with wide eyes, making him fidget nervously. “Are you going to say anyth-”

“You’re such an idiot Dream.” Sapnap interrupted and George laughed. It threw Dream off balance to see Sapnap and George on the same page about something while Dream was completely out of the loop. Normally Dream knew everything. Right now he didn’t even know what to do.

Dream tensed. Did they think it was a joke? Did they think it was funny? “Are you serious? *I’m* an idiot? Aft-” He was interrupted again, this time by Sapnap’s lips on his own.

Sapnap’s lips. Holy shit, Sapnap was kissing him. It took a few seconds for Dream’s brain to catch up with what was happening and in that time, the pyromancer started pulling away, which was the opposite of what Dream wanted to happen.

Dream grabbed Sapnap by the arm and pulled him flush against his chest just to kiss him again. This time when they broke apart, he stared at the pyromancer with disbelief. “What the hell was that?”

Sapnap laughed. “You know Dream, you’re really kind of slow.”

“Wha-”

“You do realize that every time George and I have told you we love you, we meant it for realsies, right?”

Dream felt like the world was tilting, sending everything, even his own mind, spiraling. “Well yeah, you’re supposed to tell your friends you love them.”

“I would never.” George said confidently.

“Yeah Dream, George would never.”

But George had told Dream he loves him. “But then you-”

“Every. Single. Time. Dream.” Sapnap was careful to enunciate every word.

“But Sapnap, you’ve been saying it for-” For years. For almost as long as Dream had known him.

“We’ve literally just been waiting for you to figure it out. We knew we were in love with you and that you were in love with us, we were just waiting for you to realize it.”

“Except you’re an idiot and it’s taken you so long.” George laughed.

They were in love with him. They both were in love with him. Dream couldn’t believe it. He had spent so long being completely unaware of his own feelings for his best friends and somehow they had both been patient enough to wait for him to figure it out. He was in love with them. He had been for the whole time, probably since the moment they met.

“Oh my god. I *am* an idiot.” Dream groaned and buried his face in Sapnap’s shoulder.

Sapnap snorted. “Stop freaking out for a second, you owe George a kiss too.”

“Wait, what?” George exclaimed, obviously not prepared.

Dream and Sapnap gave each other matching grins. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Oh yeah.” Sapnap replied.

George’s eyes widened once he realized he was getting ganged up on. “Hey! Wait a second!”

“Come here George!” Dream hollered.

“Yeah George, where’s our kisses?”

Instead of answering, George turned on his heel and sprinted away, shrieking as his two friends chased him through the streets of Peltragow and out of the city gates.

~

Just like George said they would, they were travelling through the desert to Bolson without any extra supplies, and yet Dream and Sapnap still wore wide grins. George, on the other hand, was pouting, an effect made worse by how swollen and bruised his lips were after being thoroughly kissed by both of them.

“We’re boyfriends now, right?” Dream asked.

Sapnap rolled his eyes, but was still grinning from ear to ear. “Yes Dream, just like we said the last twenty times you asked, we are boyfriends.”

“I know. I just wanted to hear you say it again.”

George didn't say anything, but he did grab Dream and Sapnap's hands, which, coming from him, was practically a confession of undying love and affection.

“You know we could be called lovers inste- OW!” Sapnap yelped when George kicked him in the shin.

“That's what you get for saying something stupid.”

## Chapter End Notes

Ha! Two chapters in a week! And they said it couldn't be done! They were both longer than normal too, so I must be on a freaking roll.



# In Sickness and In Health

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap, Dream, and George make the trip across the desert to Bolson without any supplies. If that wasn't worrying enough, Dream falls sick with a mysterious illness.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

Holy shit this chapter took me forever to write. Sorry if there's any continuity errors, I wrote it a little bit at a time and didn't bother editing to make sure it flowed properly when it was done.

Also!!!! Enjoy some hints of Dream's past!!!! There will probably be more in later chapters!!!!

Dream feels heavy. His feet feel heavy, his limbs, his eyelids, just the act of looking forward to see where he is going has him feeling exhausted. His head is pounding and every breath he takes of the dry desert air feels like sandpaper in his throat. Forget about feeling heavy, Dream feels like he is *dying*, which can't be right. He isn't injured, there's no bleeding, he isn't old enough for old age to get him, and he isn't drowning or anything. Just walking. Walking a long way to Bolson.

Distantly, Dream is aware that Sapnap and George are walking near him. He is even aware of them speaking, but it's like he's underwater, no matter how hard he focuses, he just can't make out what they're saying.

"eam! *Dream!*" Sapnap grabs Dream by the arm and yanks him back so he's facing them. The world keeps spinning long after he stops moving. "Holy shit Dream, you're ice cold!"

Dream frowns, "what do you mean?" His voice is raspy and only serves to make his throat hurt even more.

"Something's wrong," George steps closer and peers up at Dream's face, or his mask at least, but with how intense his gaze is, Dream feels like George is staring through it, "are you okay Dream?"

He grins, "Never better Georgie!" Instead of reassuring his boyfriend, George only frowns deeper.

"You've been muttering to yourself all day and you look like you're barely staying on your feet, are you sick?"

Dream scoffs, "I can't get sick. It doesn't work on me! I'm *fine*."

He probably would have succeeded in convincing his boyfriends that he was, in fact, fine, if he hadn't suddenly stumbled at that exact moment. Sapnap barely managed to catch Dream by the

arm, stopping him from landing face first into the sand. George and Sapnap exchanged worried looks. Dream never faltered.

“I think you are sick.” Dream would have continued to be adamant in his denial if it weren’t for the tone of Sapnap’s voice. He was so used to the carefree and joking attitude of the pyromancer that hearing him sound so distressed was, well, distressing.

The masked man had the urge to lighten the mood. “Guess you gave me your cold with all that kissing then,” Dream joked with a lopsided grin. Instead of getting Sapnap to relax, even just a little, like he hoped, his expression soured with something Dream couldn’t quite place. Dream frowned and swayed until he was leaning heavily on Sapnap. He couldn’t think right. It was odd because Dream could normally tell what Sapnap and George were thinking just from their body language, but now he couldn’t even focus enough to form a full thought.

“We’re at least a day away from Bolson still, do you think he’ll make it?” George asked the pyromancer in a hushed tone. There was no need to be quiet, they were in the middle of nowhere and Dream was too out of it to understand, but for some reason it felt wrong to voice his concerns any louder.

Sapnap glanced down at Dream who was now barely supporting his own weight with how heavily he was leaning on Sapnap. He wrapped his masked boyfriend in his arms to keep him upright and shivered. Dream felt like literal ice in his arms. “I’ll just have to carry him the rest of the way.”

“I’ll help,” George said immediately. Sapnap looked the brunette up and down and gave him a questioning glance. “What?”

“You weigh the same as a housecat when wet, do you really think you can carry Dream?”

George frowned, but didn’t argue further, “fine, but you didn’t have to be so rude about it.”

Normally Sapnap would have laughed, but it felt wrong to enjoy himself in this situation. He had never seen Dream be any less than fully alert and here he was, completely unable to stand on his own and muttering nonsense into Sapnap’s shirt.

With George’s help, he managed to get Dream up onto his back and the trio were able to once again start moving. George led the way, keeping a steady and slow pace for Sapnap to follow. The brunette kept throwing concerned glances over his shoulder, but Sapnap ignored them, instead focusing on the ground in front of him. His muscles were burning from the strain, walking long distances through sand alone is difficult, but with the extra weight of Dream on his back, Sapnap almost wanted to call it impossible. It was the middle of the day and the sand was so hot he could feel it through the soles of his boots. Even worse, Dream was like ice draped across his back, he felt so cold *it burned*.

All thoughts left Sapnap’s head except putting one foot in front of the other and following the footprints George made ahead of them. It could have been minutes or it could have been hours later, but eventually George stopped walking and Sapnap was forced to look up. It was night. They could see the lights of Bolson on the horizon, maybe another two or three hours of walking and they would reach it.

“Why did you stop?” Sapnap asked. George had turned around and was looking at him with concern.

George took a moment, chewing on the inside of his cheek, before responding. “We should stop for the night and then keep moving in the morning. There’s a lot of mobs and you look terrible.”

“Thanks.” Sapnap replied sarcastically.

“No that’s-” George cut himself off with a frustrated groan. “If you collapse from exhaustion before we get there, then what am I supposed to do? You need to rest too.”

“No offense George, but we don’t have any food or water left. None of us have eaten today and our best hunter is practically braindead, if we don’t make it to Bolson tonight, we might not make it at all.”

It was true. They hadn’t managed to get supplies before attempting to cross the desert and the three of them had been hurting because of it. Now with Dream out of commission, they could very well die if they didn’t get to town as fast as possible.

George had a pinched expression on his face, but instead of arguing he turned on his heel and continued walking towards the lights in the distance.

They made it. Barely.

When they were almost to the edge of town, George hurried on ahead to find somewhere for them to stay and take care of Dream, whether that was a clinic or an inn, it didn’t matter. Bolson used to be a busy mining town that was an oasis in the center of the desert, but then the mines dried up and everyone that could afford it packed up and moved away, now it was barely large enough for the two iron golems that were lumbering around. It was possible that there wasn’t an inn or a doctor in the whole town. Instead of worrying about that, Sapnap just kept walking and focused on not dropping his boyfriend until he reached the center of town where he waited for George to find them again.

Looking around, Sapnap could see people peeking out of their windows at him and it put the pyromancer on edge. As a wanted criminal carrying around someone even more wanted, having eyes on him was never a good thing.

“M’ sorry Bad.” Dream whispered suddenly. It was the first thing he said that Sapnap could understand in hours and he almost dropped the taller boy in surprise. “I’ll clean it up.” His words were slurred together and all Sapnap could think was *who’s Bad?*

“Dream?” He asked, trying to rouse his boyfriend from his delirium.

“You there!” A tall man with a large mustache called out, making Sapnap jump. The man strode towards them with purpose and Sapnap debated making a run for it, but he was so exhausted he didn’t think he would make it another ten feet without collapsing. “Are you in need of assistance young man?”

“Um.” Sapnap wasn’t sure if he should answer honestly. Being a thief from an early age taught him to trust strangers sparingly. Dream shifted slightly, reminding Sapnap of why they were there. “My friend came ahead to find somewhere for us to stay. I’m waiting for him.”

The man smiled warmly. “Well look no further! I can direct you to a place where you and your companions can stay while you’re in town.” He held out his hand to shake in greeting before realizing that Sapnap’s hands were quite full, holding up Dream’s legs. “I am the mayor of this town and I would be delighted to show you around. We don’t get many travellers to these parts anymore so your arrival has caused quite a buzz.”

Dream groaned and shifted again, causing Sapnap to almost lose his balance. “Is your friend alright there?” The mayor asked, a concerned look on his face.

“Sun sickness.” Sapnap lied. “He collapsed earlier, but some water and rest and he’ll be fine.” He didn’t believe that water and rest would help Dream at all, but he wasn’t about to admit to some random town mayor that his non-human criminal boyfriend was suffering from a mysterious illness. The mayor looked like he didn’t believe him, but the man nodded anyways.

“Sapnap!” He turned to see George running up. He was holding a basket that smelled *heavenly* and Sapnap barely kept himself from drooling.

“I see you found the bakery!” The mayor exclaimed.

“Yes.” George replied, sounding unsure and confused.

“As I was telling your friend here, I’m the mayor, and I would be delighted to show you boys a place you can stay while your friend recovers.”

“Oh, um-”

“We’d like that.” Sapnap interrupted. Normally he would be more suspicious of a stranger being so kind, but Dream was getting heavy and they didn’t exactly have any other options.

The mayor nodded, “Right then, follow me.”

He led Sapnap and George away from the center of town to a house a few streets over. It looked small and unassuming from the outside and when the mayor opened the door to let them in, it appeared even more humble on the inside. “The previous owners left town a few months ago for greener pastures and it’s been sitting empty ever since. It could use a bit of cleaning, bou boys are welcome to stay as long as you’d like.”

“Thank you.” George said

The mayor left the small house, closing the door behind him. Sapnap walked over to the bed to put down Dream. Letting go of his masked boyfriend *hurt*. His fingers had gone numb hours ago and now that they were free, Sapnap could see that they were discolored with frostbite.

“Oh my god.” George was staring at Sapnap’s hands, horrified. “He’s that cold?” Sapnap could only nod.

He called forth his fire, making his eyes glow a bright orange, and breathed directly onto his hands with a controlled flame until they were no longer blue.

The rest of the night was a series of shuffling as Sapnap and George wrapped Dream up in blankets, ate the bread George had bought at the bakery, and coaxed a delirious Dream into eating as well. He kept mumbling to himself and no matter how hard they listened, they couldn’t understand a word of it, almost like it was in another language. Eventually the two of them curled around either side of Dream and reluctantly fell into a restless sleep.

Dream’s symptoms only worsened overnight. In the morning, Sapnap woke to see George fretting over Dream who, despite still being ice cold to the touch, was sweating a worrying amount and shaking like a leaf.

“What do we do?” George asked, distressed.

Sapnap didn’t know. If Dream was human they would keep him warm and hydrated until his fever broke, but Dream wasn’t human and this wasn’t a fever. Anything they would normally do for a sick human could very well make Dream worse, but they also couldn’t do nothing.

“Let’s get him out of his clothes. Sitting in his own sweat probably isn’t helping.” George nodded and they carefully maneuvered Dream into a sitting position.

“Hi.” Dream said with a giddy smile on his face. It was relieving to see that Dream was at least semi-lucid again, even if he still wasn’t back to himself yet.

“Hi Dream.” Sapnap replied with a tight smile of his own before pulling up Dream’s shirt over his head, being extremely careful to avoid the man’s mask, while George kept him in a sitting position. It would be easy to get a look at his mysterious boyfriend’s face while he was so delirious, but both Sapnap and George would never betray Dream’s trust like that. Not when they knew how much it meant to him to keep his face hidden.

Dream squirmed, trying to help get rid of the offending garment, but only succeeded in making things more difficult for George.

“Just hold still Dream!” The older man complained, which only made Dream move against his grip even more. “Sapnap, help me keep him still!”

Sapnap didn’t answer and George looked up to see him staring at Dream’s chest with a horrified expression. George let go of his masked boyfriend and let him fall back into the bed so he could get a look at what was bothering the pyromancer. He swore.

Dream giggled. “Language!”

Sapnap and George didn’t react to his words. Dream’s entire torso was covered in deep purple markings that looked almost like tree roots growing across his chest, George would have mistaken them for tattoos if it weren’t for how they shimmered.

“Do you think that’s another symptom?” George asked quietly.

“I don’t know.”

“What are we supposed to do?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then how do we help him get better?”

“I don’t know George!” Sapnap shouted, making the smaller man flinch. “If you haven’t noticed, I don’t know anymore about Dream than you and it’s not like either of us are smart enough to figure it out. I don’t know what to do. All I know is that Dream is sick and we can’t do anything about it!”

Dream laughed again. “I’m not sick Sap.”

Both Sapnap and George’s heads snapped in his direction. “What the hell are you talking about Dream? You can’t even sit up on your own!”

“Sapnap stop, yelling at him won’t help, he’s delirious.” George sounded exhausted.

“I am not sick.” Dream said with emphasis.

This only served to further confuse his boyfriends. “Then who is sick Dream?”

Dream only hummed. “I wonder.”

“That doesn’t make any sense!” George groaned. “Come on Dream, please explain what you mean.” He urged, but it was too late, Dream was back to babbling in a mysterious language, his brief period of lucidness having passed.

“Great. Now what?” Sapnap huffed.

George didn’t answer. Sapnap turned to look at the older man, George was usually the quickest to panic and was hardly ever quiet about it. What he found was a horrified expression on his face as he stared at their masked boyfriend, even more so than when they discovered the marking covering Dream’s chest. “What?” Sapnap asked hesitantly. He was afraid of the answer, they were already out of their depth with Dream’s illness as it is.

“He’s asleep.”

The sound Sapnap made wasn’t human. It was strangled out of his chest as he turned to look at Dream, distress showing on every one of his features. “You’re lying. Dream doesn’t sleep. He *can’t* sleep. He’s just resting his eyes or something.”

Even as he objected, he knew that George only spoke the truth. George’s clairvoyance was fickle and often left the older man with more questions than answers, but whenever he was certain of something, it was always true. If Sapnap thought he was disoriented before, he was wrong. Now he was utterly and hopelessly *lost*.

~

Summer was in full swing and the damp heat of the forest was oppressive, even in the shade of the dark oaks that surrounded Dream. In the distance, he could hear the soft babble of a stream over the buzz of cicadas in the trees. He turned in the direction of the water, desperate for a chance to cool down, and walked until it was in sight.

The mud was cool between his toes. Dream looked down to stare at his bare feet, confused, he didn’t remember taking his shoes off. The promise of the cool stream water shook him of his confusion and he stepped close enough that his toes barely touched the water before squatting down and sinking his hands beneath the surface.

The water stilled.

On the surface of the water, Dream could see the reflection of his mask and he quickly pulled his hands from the water in disgust at the sight of it. When the water calmed once again, it’s surface perfectly still and glassy, instead of the reflection of his mask, he saw his face. He studied it for a moment. It wasn’t like the face he remembered having, that face was ten years younger and free of the burdens he suffered since then. It wasn’t a face he recognized, but he knew, without a doubt, that was *his* face.

“You’re beautiful.” Dream’s head snapped up. On the other side of the water stood George, who was staring unabashedly at his face. He gasped and frantically reached around for his mask to no avail. He couldn’t force himself to break eye contact with George in order to look and it wasn’t like he could remember taking his mask off in the first place.

A hand abruptly grabbed his chin and forced him to look to the side. The silence was suddenly broken by the sudden roaring of the river as it turned quickly into white water rapids. Brown eyes greedily took in all of the details of his face and it took all of Dream’s effort to stop himself from flinching under the scrutiny. *It’s just Sapnap*, he told himself, but it didn’t help calm his nerves.

George appeared beside Sapnap, a soft smile on his face. “We love you Dream. We’ll always love you.”

“But you don’t love us, do you?” Sapnap spoke in a haunting tone and Dream shivered.

“That’s not true.” Dream whispered and averted his eyes. The pyromancer only tightened his grip on his face.

“Look at us, Dream.”

Dream whined, “No.”

“*Dream.*”

Dream reluctantly turned his gaze back to his boyfriends, but what he found weren’t the faces he knew. Instead of the brown and black eyes he knew better than he knew his own, he only saw purple. Glowing, shimmering purple.

Dream gasped awake.

He bolted upright, grasping desperately at his face, unable to calm his racing heart until he felt his mask firmly in place. Arms wrapped tightly around him and he struggled against their grasp, but they only tightened. The high pitched ringing in his ears began to fade and he recognized the sounds of sobbing and damp tears falling onto his bare chest.

Sapnap and George were both desperately clinging to him and crying. Dream took a deep ragged breath before freeing his arms so he could pull both of them closer.

“I’m sorry.” He rasped. “I’m so sorry.”

It was hours later before all three of them were calm enough to speak in hushed tones while curled up in each other's arms. The bed was barely made for two people, but the three of them huddled together as close as physically possible, leaving enough room for a whole extra person.

“We thought you were dying.” George’s voice was raw from crying. “You were asleep for three whole days, we didn’t even know it was possible for you to sleep.”

“I used to sleep.” Dream admitted. “I probably can sleep, I just don’t need it when I’m here. It’s uncomfortable even.”

Sapnap sent him a curious glance. “Here?” He questioned.

Dream only hummed in response. Sapnap and George both knew that meant they weren’t going to get an answer, no matter how much they asked.

“Who’s Bad?” Sapnap asked suddenly. Dream stiffened.

“I said a lot of things while I was out of it, didn’t I?”

Sapnap shook his head. “Not really.”

“He’s an old friend I guess. Not that it matters, he’s not around anymore.” It looked painful for Dream to admit that. “What else did I say?”

“Just that it wasn’t possible for you to get sick.” George answered while Sapnap was still thinking. “That you weren’t the one who was sick.”

Dream chuckled. "That actually makes sense."

George glared at him. "You have got to be joking. That made the least amount of sense out of everything you said and you spent most of the time speaking in another language."

The only response he got was a half-hearted shrug. "Sorry Baby."

George flushed bright red at the pet name and Sapnap burst into laughter. "That's not funny!" He seethed and punched Sapnap in the arm. It only made the pyromancer laugh harder.

~

They left Bolson the next morning. This time they were able to buy supplies off of the townspeople to help them with the rest of their journey across the desert. The mayor seemed disappointed to see them go, but didn't comment on it, only wishing them the best of luck on their travels.

Sapnap and Dream bickered as they trekked over a hill and out of sight of the small mining town. George trailed behind, quietly contemplating the past few days. Dream's symptoms had all faded, but with his clothes firmly in place, George couldn't exactly check for himself.

He had his suspicions though.

The markings weren't a symptom. If anything, George was pretty sure that they had always been there and that Dream was carefully hiding that they wouldn't be going away anytime soon. Sapnap had told George that he thought they looked like tree roots or vines growing across his torso, and while George agreed that they looked like they were growing, he didn't think roots were a close enough likeness. He didn't say anything about his suspicions to Sapnap, the pyromancer had already been worried enough once Dream had fallen asleep. He had been so worried, he didn't notice as the markings slowly crept along their boyfriend's chest, growing by millimeters each night.

*Parasite*, George thought to himself, *It looks like a parasite.*

He knew better than to think he would get an answer if he asked, but George kept wondering what would happen to Dream when it finished growing.



# This City is a Fucking Nightmare

## Chapter Summary

George and Dream are fighting so Sappnap decides to go into the city to kill time until they get their heads out of their asses and apologize to each other. Things go very wrong very quickly.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It started with a fight. Fights between the three friends weren't uncommon, but what was unusual was that, for once, it wasn't Sappnap and George that were fighting. Yes, Sappnap and George spent a lot of time bickering, but they were also more emotionally volatile than Dream, so when there were serious fights to be had, it was usually Sappnap and George going at it. Dream was usually so unaffected by their actual squabbles, like he couldn't tell the difference between when they were being petty and when they were actually hurt, like he didn't ascribe to normal emotional reactions. Sappnap was pretty sure it had something to do with what Dream actually was, but he would never admit it aloud. Somehow, George had figured out all the right buttons to press, he had provoking reactions from Dream down to a *science*, and that's exactly what he did.

"That's not what I meant and you know it!" Dream shouted, sending shivers down Sappnap's spine.

George didn't even flinch. "Oh really? Do I now? Because to me it seems like you're just shovelling shit like it's solid gold!" If there was one thing that Sappnap envied about George, it was how he didn't notice Dream's aura when he was angry. That, or he didn't care. Even though Sappnap knew Dream would never hurt him, sometimes there was just something about the masked man that left him with the urge to run. It was the one instinct that Sappnap never listened to.

"So what? You think I'm a liar?"

George laughed in his face. "I think you aren't right nearly as often as you think you are!"

Honestly, Sappnap wasn't even sure what they were fighting about. George had been pissy all morning and Sappnap had been observant enough to notice and also smart enough to avoid the older man. Dream hadn't. At this point he knew that their fight wasn't going to end anytime soon, George was too stubborn and Dream was too prideful.

Sappnap got to his feet, he was tired of watching them shout in circles. "Well, I'm gonna go into town while you two sort yourselves out, anybody want a souvenir?" They continued yelling, not even noticing that the pyromancer had spoken. Sappnap snorted. "Typical."

The walk to the nearby city was peaceful once he was out of earshot of his friends. He had at least a few hours to himself, so he took his time to go at his own pace and enjoy the scenery, for once not needing to keep up with Dream's long legs and George's impatience. This time their travels

had taken them to just outside the city of Farrow, the largest city in the country, not that countries meant anything to Sapnap, they crossed borders almost on a daily basis, but Sapnap still knew of Farrow. Like with all large cities, there was a large criminal presence within its borders, so Sapnap was fairly safe from being arrested for past crimes, but that wasn't the only reason for him to be concerned.

Farrow was not kind to pyromancers.

Pyromancers, in general, were not a popular group of mages. In many countries, just being a pyromancer was punishable by death, but Sapnap had always been better than most at hiding his magic. Farrow wasn't in one of those countries, but discrimination against pyromancers was still rampant, and he knew that if he was recognized as a pyromancer, he would be arrested. Normally that wouldn't be a problem, travelling with Dream had given him ample experience at breaking out of cells, but Farrow was different.

People who get thrown into jail in Farrow never come out.

Sapnap had lots of theories as to why that is, but he was too much of an optimist to contemplate those sorts of rumors. After all, why bother worrying when he wasn't going to be caught in the first place?

There were guards posted at the city gates, watching everyone entering the city with scrutiny, but Sapnap easily blended into the crowd of people from surrounding villages that shuffled into the city for work. It didn't take long for him to reach the market district.

Sapnap loved market districts. So many shopkeepers kept their goods out, just laying out on top of display tables, so much hustle and bustle that made slipping in and out of crowds so easy, and so many people were too focused on getting a good deal that they hardly noticed when he brushed by. People were also so funny sometimes. They would be so diligent in checking their pockets for their coin purse that they didn't realize they were just advertising the location of their money to the very pickpockets they were trying to avoid.

For someone with sticky fingers, places like this were a haven of things just waiting to be taken. Of course, Sapnap is also someone with *incredible* luck, which means he immediately got himself into trouble.

He swiped a couple of rare books off of a display without being noticed, it was always nice to add to his collection, but then he tried to pick someone's pocket. The guy was slim and wearing clothes that were a little too flashy for the part of town he was in. That should have tipped Sapnap off, the only people that wore flashy clothes like that in a city with high crime rates were plants and criminals with serious reputations, but he always had a habit of acting without thinking.

His hand was slipping out of the man's pocket, a coin purse snug in his grip, when a hand grasped him tightly around the wrist. It felt a little bit like iron chains.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" Just from the sound of his voice, Sapnap could tell he was fucked. He struggled to free himself, but the man just tightened his grip and yanked Sapnap closer so he couldn't get away. "A little rat looking for dinner."

Sapnap was nervous and when he was nervous, he had a habit of running his mouth. "Come on man, it's like lunch time at the latest." Obviously the wrong thing to say when at the mercy of someone who could only be an experienced criminal.

The man sneered and turned around. He dragged Sapnap out of the market district, his grip on

Sapnap's arm so tight he could swear he felt the bones in his forearm grinding together. His blood turned ice cold when a group of men fell in step around them. It seemed the man had friends and for once, Sapnap had never felt so alone.

They turned down an alley and the smell of salt filled his nose as they went closer and closer to the docks. No matter the city, no matter how different they seemed or how far apart they were, the docks were always the same. If a criminal was looking to kill someone, they would take them to the docks. Sapnap began to desperately struggle against the man's grip, to no avail. Instead he earned another hand, the hand of a burly lackey, gripped on the upper part of his free arm.

Sapnap got one look at the sea before he was thrown to the ground in an alley. He scrambled to his feet and turned to run away, but the alley was a dead end and the only exit had seven criminals blocking his way to freedom.

"Look at this, he's like an animal in a cage!" The gaudy man, obviously the leader, jeered. The rest of the thugs laughed loudly, but Sapnap could only barely hear it over the sound of his pounding heart.

He began to desperately think of a way out. He didn't have his sword on him, he didn't bring it out of fear of getting too much attention from the city guard, so fighting his way out wasn't a viable option. He could use his fire, but that would have to be a last resort. It wouldn't help if he managed to get away from the criminals only to get arrested by the city guard for being a pyromancer. Sapnap decided to try and talk his way out.

"Fellas! Come on! There's no need for the rough treatment, I'm just your average guy." Sapnap laughed nervously.

"I don't know, I think you need to be taught a lesson about what happens to wandering hands." Gaudy said. The burly guy that had thrown Sapnap grinned menacingly and twirled a knife around his fingers.

"Hey, I didn't actually steal anything! So no harm no foul, right?" Technically, that wasn't true. He still had the antique books he stole in his bag and he had Burly's wallet tucked into his sleeve. The brutish types really had no sense after all, barging into Sapnap's space and then expecting him to keep his hands to himself. It was just too easy to resist, like taking candy from a baby.

Gaudy laughs. "Sorry little rat, but my boys here are a little bloodthirsty. It's been too long since they got a chance to play."

"Right. Well, I did try doing this the nice way."

The sweat on Sapnap's skin sizzled as it evaporated, the damp sea air around him turned to steam, and several of the goons instinctively stepped backwards as Sapnap's irises burned a bright orange. With a snap of his fingers, he sent his flame soaring straight for Gaudy's chest.

Gaudy didn't even flinch.

An eighth man that had gone unnoticed by Sapnap appeared between his flame and Gaudy. Sapnap didn't even register what had happened until he was doubled over in pain, every nerve in his body screaming like he was being burned alive from inside out. As soon as it had started, the pain stopped, and Sapnap was left curled up on the ground, gasping for air.

He looked at the man who saved Gaudy and flinched. His eyes were entirely black, the sign of a null.

“Fuck you.” Sapnap gasped out. The null only grinned.

Nulls were the rarest type of mage out there. They had the ability to stop other mages from using their magic, making them incredibly unpopular among the magically inclined crowd. Nulls didn’t take away magic or make it impossible to use, instead they had an affect on mages that made it so painful to use magic, that pushing through it to use magic anyways could kill a mage.

“A pyromancer, huh?” Gaudy stepped forward, brushing an imaginary bit of dirt from his ridiculously tacky vest, “I have to say, I didn’t see that one coming. You have your magic so well controlled I mistook you for a regular human.”

Sapnap winced as he sat up, the pain from using his magic while under the effects of a null still lingered. “I’ll take that as a compliment.” He groaned. He tried to stand, but couldn’t get any further than his knees without his muscles threatening to give out.

“Well that seems like enough excitement for today and I am rather late for an appointment with my tailor, so, gentlemen, if we can get this show on the road, I might still make it before the shop closes.” Gaudy said and made sweeping gestures towards his thugs.

One of them, a bald man with a large scar on the side of his head, drew a large iron sword and stepped forward until he was directly in front of Sapnap. He glanced once at Gaudy, who nodded, and pulled his arm back.

The sword seemed to be moving in slow motion as it came careening towards his neck.

*I’m going to die.* Sapnap realized. He was surprisingly calm. The sword was heavy enough and moving quick enough that his head would likely be separated from his shoulders in one swing. Sapnap would have laughed if he had the time, Dream always called him brainless and now he was actually going to be! His only regret was that George and Dream would never know what happened to him, in fact, if they were still fighting, they probably wouldn’t even realize he was missing until Sapnap was long dead. He was going to be turned into fish food.

Sapnap was so calm about his impending death, he didn’t even realize what was happening at first. He felt a gentle touch in his mind, like a polite knock at the door to his thoughts, and then a more insistent tugging. Sapnap smiled warmly and gave himself over to that familiar feeling.

Dream slipped in under his skin like it was as natural as breathing.

He swayed Sapnap’s body backwards and watched as the sword missed his nose by maybe the width of a piece of paper.

*Cutting it a little close there, aren’t you?*

“Shut up.” Dream growled in response. It was weird to hear his own voice speak without having any control over his own mouth, but instead of complaining, Sapnap took the hint and fell silent.

Sapnap’s leg kicked out in the same movement, knocking Baldy’s legs out from under him, he then grabbed the man by the wrist and squeezed, *hard*. Hard enough to get him to instinctively drop his sword, which Dream as Sapnap took eagerly. Baldy was dead before he could blink, run through with his own sword.

The sword was heavy in Sapnap’s hand, much heavier than he was used to fighting with, but Dream swung it easily, like it was made to be in Sapnap’s grasp. Two more thugs were dead before Sapnap even had time to think. The null snarled at him and his eyes once again shadowed over into total black, for the life of him, Sapnap couldn’t figure out why he would do that instead of

running and the null must have realized it too because his eyes widened in shock just seconds before Dream stabbed him through the chest.

In the reflection of the null's eyes, Sapnap could see his own, glowing bright green.

*It looks like magic.* Sapnap thought before he could stop himself. He could feel Dream's amusement in reply.

Dream continued to dance out of reach of the thugs, only coming in close enough when he was striking a deathblow. It was hard not to envy the masked man once he was inside his head. He could see that everything came naturally, that each flawless strike took no thought, that his grace was effortless. Even in Sapnap's body, which had never moved like this in his entire life, he fought like he was dancing.

The fight only lasted ten seconds before all the thugs, except Gaudy who had chosen to hide behind some crates, were dead. He threw his hands up and began backing away as Dream approached him with squared shoulders and a murderous glare.

"Now wait a second! We can talk this out, I mean, you're obviously fine so no harm n-" Gaudy's protests were cut short by Dream stabbing the man through his throat. If Sapnap had been in control of his own body, he would have winced at the brutality of it. Dream pulled the sword from Gaudy's throat, letting his body fall to the ground, and then tossing the sword down beside it.

They stood there like that, for at least three times as long as the fight had lasted, just breathing the same air. Sapnap's eyes closed and the pyromancer realized that Dream was trying to calm himself down.

*Are you okay?*

Dream let out a choked sound. "No."

*Sorry.*

"Sorry?" Sapnap's eyes flew open and his legs began pacing. "You were about to die! You were going to die and-" He cut himself off with a strangled whine and came to a complete standstill.

"How can you be okay?" He asked Sapnap in a whisper.

*Because you're here.*

It was true. Sapnap couldn't feel alone with Dream beside him in his own head and having the masked man so close made him feel safer than he had ever been in his entire life. Dream sounded like he was choking and it occurred to Sapnap that he was able to read the pyromancer's emotions as well as his thoughts. He tried to send what he hoped was a representation of a flirty wink in thought form and when Dream laughed, he knew he had been at least somewhat successful.

Dream walked further into the alley to the back wall and began to scale the building using the worn bricks for foot and handholds. Sapnap was impressed, he didn't think he had the hand strength for that kind of climbing. Dream pulled them up onto the roof where they came face to face with a *furious* George who was barely holding up the weight of Dream's limp body in his arms. His eyes were wet. He'd been crying.

"Explain." George demanded.

"We're sorry." Dream replied immediately.

“We?”

Dream had the decency to look sheepish, but he must not have pulled it off as well in Sapnap’s body as he did his own because George only looked even more mad.

“I thought you were going to die Sapnap! I thought I was going to have to sit here and watch as one of my best friends had their throat slit and all you have for me is a cryptic apology? You’re sounding like Dream right now!” He laughed, somehow making it sound condescending in that special way only George could manage, “And now Dream is- Dream is- He’s-” George burst into a fresh round of tears.

“Hey, hey, shhh, calm down, I’m right here George.” Dream reached over and grabbed George’s shoulder, pulling him into a hug, “It’s okay George, I’m right here.”

“Wha- Dream?” George pulled away from the hug to look at Sapnap’s face with disbelief.

“I, uh-I might be possessing Sapnap right now?”

George dropped Dream’s limp form. The sound he made when his body smacked against the roof made both Dream and Sapnap wince. “You fucking what?”

“I can possess people?”

George punched him in the nose. Or he would have punched him, except Dream flew the coop when George’s fist was just inches from Sapnap’s face. Sapnap stumbled backwards, straight for the edge of the roof, but before he could fall, Dream’s body popped up and grabbed him by the arm.

“Ow! What the fuck George!” Sapnap shouted. George’s eyes widened and he had the decency to look guilty.

“I’m sorry! I was trying to hit Dream!”

“While he was in my body? I’d still be the one living with a broken nose!”

George fell silent before quietly asking, “Did I really break it?”

“What?” Sapnap was a little distracted by the pain. Not to mention he was suddenly overwhelmed by sore muscles and bruises he accumulated while Dream had been at the steering wheel.

“Did I break your nose?”

“I don’t know.” He admitted and pulled his hands away so George could get a better look at it when he stepped closer.

“I thought I was going to lose you. I just- Me and Dream were fighting and I just got this horrible feeling that something was going wrong and then you were there, seconds away from death, and you just looked so *okay with it*.” Sapnap didn’t think he had ever seen George look so terrified in his life.

Sapnap’s voice broke with emotion, “I’m sorry. I’m so *so* sorry George.”

“I mean- What were you even doing to almost get executed in an alley anyways?”

He and George had been having a heartfelt moment as he examined his nose and Sapnap knew his answer would only ruin it. Sapnap averted his gaze, unable to meet George’s eyes. “I picked their

pockets.” He mumbled.

His admission was met with silence. None of them moved, Sapnap was pretty sure that Dream wasn’t even *breathing*. When he finally got the courage to meet George’s eyes again, he found the older man staring at him with disbelief written all over his face.

George punched Dream in the throat.

The masked man gasped for air, obviously not expecting the attack. “What the hell George?” He managed to garble out.

“I already punched Sapnap for what you did, it’s only fair I hit you next.” George replied, turning up his nose at Dream.

“That doesn’t make sense!”

“It makes perfect sense!”

“Guys! Can you stop fighting for once? Please?” Sapnap managed to step in between the two of them.

“Oh don’t worry, as soon as I’m done with Dream, I still have a bone to pick with you!” George snarled.

“Hey! How did I suddenly become the problem?”

“You’re always the problem.” Dream snorted.

They all fell silent, staring at each other. George broke first, bursting into a fit of giggles, followed by Sapnap, and then Dream. Their laughter only escalated until Sapnap had tears in his eyes and had to hold onto Dream in order to stay on his feet. It was a combination of sheer relief that they were all okay and the complete ridiculousness of the situation that had Sapnap unable to keep his composure. He had been so close to death, and yeah, he would probably have nightmares about it later, but right now it seemed so god damned funny.

They kept having fits of giggles as they leapt across rooftops. George was snickering so much that he slipped and crashed into Dream when they were climbing back down to street level, which sent them into a whole new wave of laughter. They laughed so hard as they exited the city. The guards looked down their nose at the three of them, and despite the blood that covered Sapnap’s clothes, they were dismissed as mere drunks.

Dream found that *hilarious*.

~

“You guys aren’t hiding anything else from me, are you?” George asked. They were huddled around a campfire, Sapnap tucked closely between his two friends. Despite how much they had laughed, the pyromancer’s near death experience had shaken all of them and Dream and George felt the need to be close, just to assure themselves that he was really there, that he really was okay. Sapnap’s eyes were heavy and he was incredibly close to drifting off, but he managed to keep himself awake to listen to George and Dream talk.

“No.” Sapnap felt Dream’s answer more than he heard it with how he was tucked into the taller man’s chest. He was also cradling Sapnap’s arm in his hands, stroking it like that would make the dark bruise left by Gaudy disappear.

Sapnap couldn't make out George's reply, but he knew the older man well enough, and he bet that George didn't trust Dream's words one bit. He almost laughed because George was entirely correct. The pyromancer managed to gather the strength to open his eyes one last time and smile softly at George.

"What?" George asked, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're older than Dream." Sapnap answered. He barely saw the outraged look on George's face before his eyes fell closed again.

"You mean all those times you bossed me around because you were the oldest was just you being a jackass?" George seethed.

"Uh-"

"I can't believe you! You're just so-" Somehow, despite the racket, Sapnap was able to slip into unconsciousness. If anything, the sound of bickering helped him sleep peacefully through the night.

## Chapter End Notes

Y'all I finished the outlines for chapters 9 and 10 and honestly? You could not find two more different vibes than what those chapters have. I'm going to give you whiplash, that is a PROMISE. If you ask, I will tell you what vibes they give off, but there will be NO spoilers. I'm classy like that ;)



# Lost In The Dark

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap and Dream get lost in a mine. Some things just happen in the dark.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“*Hey there.*” Dream’s voice came from around a dark corner that Sapnap was *sure* had been empty only moments before. If anyone asked, the terrified squeak he let out in response had been very manly.

“Dream! What the hell!” Dream wheezed with laughter. “You’re such an asshole!”

The two of them were exploring an abandoned mine that they had stumbled across earlier that morning. Well, stumbled across is a bit of an understatement. They had been messing around, purposefully provoking creepers into exploding, and ended up exposing a mine in the process. George, who adamantly refused to be a part of their dangerous nonsense, had gone into town to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner. It was a bit of a walk to town, so their colorblind boyfriend was likely going to be gone until sunset. Exploring an abandoned mine seemed like the perfect sort of stupid thing to do to kill time.

It helped that the mine seemed to be filled with chests of treasures with varying value. Considering how low on funds they had been since George made them promise to stop stealing things, the chance to collect valuable items to sell was a godsend. Sapnap’s pockets were already full with different gemstones and a few pieces of gold.

“Come on. It was hilarious and you know it.” Dream replied when Sapnap pouted.

“I totally could have set you on fire.” It was true, the two of them didn’t have any torches so Sapnap had been holding his flame in his hand to light the way and he could have easily blasted it into his face. Dream, who apparently couldn’t tell the difference between when it was light and when it wasn’t, had no trouble seeing in the inky blackness of the mine. According to him, low light and full darkness ‘looked the same’.

“You would never.”

Sapnap sent Dream a flat look. “You would have deserved it for trying to scare me like that.”

“There’s no trying about it.”

“Shut up. You did not scare me.”

“If you say so.” Dream sing-songed and skipped further into the dark.

Sapnap had the urge to throw a fireball at him. “You didn’t!” He shouted and chased after him.

Dream easily slipped away in the darkness, Sapnap's flame wasn't bright enough to fully illuminate all of the corridors and he felt his heart rate pick up at the thought of getting caught off guard once again. He was so sure that his masked boyfriend would jump out at every corner. Even while focused completely on his surroundings, Sapnap still couldn't find the masked man. There wasn't a hint of him, not even footsteps or breathing, to indicate where Dream could be. He was just too good at hiding when he didn't want to be seen.

It was a shame that he was so focused on trying to catch a glimpse of Dream, because if he had bothered to look where he was stepping, he wouldn't have stepped on a weak board and fallen straight through the ground. His head smacked against the edge on the way down, dazing him.

"Sapnap!" Dream's voice came from somewhere in the dark above him. He sounded scared. Which was weird, Dream could see perfectly fine, why would he be scared? It should be Sapnap that was scared, his only source of light had been snuffed out in the fall. After a few moments, Sapnap's head began to clear and he looked up to try and get a sense of his boyfriend's location in the darkness, but it was hopeless. Sapnap couldn't see anything.

"I'm okay!" Sapnap called out, hoping to reassure his boyfriend, but his voice quivered and betrayed his true feelings about being alone in the dark.

What could only be described as a horrifying and inhuman shriek rang out through the tunnels, making the pyromancer's skin crawl. Sapnap didn't dare move, not even to breathe, as he looked up to see glowing red eyes staring at him from the ceiling. Cave spiders.

A lot of them too, judging by the large number of red lights flickering along the walls and ceiling of the tunnel.

Too many for Sapnap and Dream to fight off on their own. Sapnap could easily take care of them in an open space, but in the narrow mine tunnels, setting off that large of a fire would turn the place into an oven. Sapnap was immune to fire, but his body was still human, that kind of heat could kill him. That didn't even account for Dream, who was nearby, and definitely not fireproof.

Sapnap shot to his feet and stumbled away from the spider nest only to trip and fall back to the ground. His legs were tangled in webs. A spider crawled across the ceiling above Sapnap and lunged at him. Sapnap was sure that he was going to die, but then the glowing red eyes were blocked from his vision and the hiss of a sword cutting cleanly through the body of the spider rang through the air. The sword sliced neatly through the webs at his feet and then Dream was hauling him to his feet and dragging him through the tunnels at a full sprint.

It was dark. It was so *so* dark. He couldn't see where they were going, any time Sapnap so much as stumbled, Dream's grip on his arm kept him upright and moving. The spiders' shrieks faded behind them, but Sapnap's heart didn't slow. He *hated* the dark.

When the echoes of their footsteps changed, Sapnap knew that they were no longer in the mines and had instead ended up deeper in the caves. Sapnap and Dream normally avoided cave systems, there were just too many mobs for them to reasonably handle alone. He could already hear the groans of zombies and the rattle of skeleton bones over their heavy breathing. If they were spotted by the mobs, they were in trouble.

Dream came to a sudden stop and Sapnap careened into his back. It took him a second to realize the masked man stopped because he was worried about Sapnap, who was hyperventilating. It was just *too* dark.

He needed light. With shaking hands, Sapnap slowly started to breathe an ember to life, only for

Dream to grab him by the wrists to stop him. He let out a strangled whine and Dream pulled him into a small corner of the cave, trapping Sapnap between his chest and the wall behind him.

“Don’t.” He whispered into Sapnap’s ear. “The mobs will be drawn to the light.”

Sapnap whined again. It was so unfair because Dream could see like the cave was lit up with sunlight while Sapnap was left struggling in the dark. Sapnap was hyperventilating again and he could tell that Dream was trying to calm him down. He could feel hands gently holding his face and Dream’s mask pressed against his forehead, but it wasn’t enough of a distraction. Dream, ever capable at reading Sapnap like an open book, understood.

The sudden kiss surprised Sapnap out of his panic. It was soft, sweet, and so entirely Dream that Sapnap couldn’t help following his lips as the masked man pulled away. He reached out and grabbed Dream’s face to pull him back in, desperate for more. This kiss, now that Dream knew that Sapnap was not only okay with being kissed, but welcomed it, was way more heated. Despite the intensity, it was still as sweet as ever with Dream gently holding his waist and Sapnap stroking his thumbs across the skin just under Dream’s eyes.

Sapnap’s brain short-circuited. He was touching Dream’s face. Dream’s *bare* face.

Dream normally kissed by pushing his mask up slightly to expose his lips and he had never, ever fully removed his mask in either of his boyfriends presence. Here, in the dark of the cave, Dream had taken off his mask to calm him down. Sapnap knew that Dream loved him, knew it with his entire being, but now, with his boyfriend’s face cradled in his hands, Sapnap really knew how much

Sapnap didn’t even notice the darkness anymore, his entire focus was on tracing the lines of his boyfriend’s face, committing every shape to memory. Dream’s forehead fell forward until it was pressed against Sapnap’s and they just stood there, breathing the same air and exchanging soft kisses, for what felt like hours.

“*I love you.*” Sapnap whispered reverently. He meant it every time he said it, but this time Dream’s breath hitched like he was hearing it for the first time. Maybe because it was the first time Sapnap wasn’t saying it to a mask.

Dream threaded his finger’s into Sapnap’s hair and pressed him against the wall in the fiercest kiss Sapnap ever experienced. He couldn’t help but close his eyes in the onslaught of sensations. Sapnap opened his mouth, ever so slightly, to suck on Dream’s bottom lip. In response, his boyfriend nipped harshly at his lip, making the pyromancer gasp. Dream swiped his tongue across Sapnap’s lip in apology before slipping into his mouth to explore every inch of what Sapnap had to offer. It felt like too much.

It felt like it wasn’t enough.

Dream pushed his knee between Sapnap’s legs, making the shorter man gasp. He pulled back and his head thumped heavily against the wall behind him. Dream immediately took the opportunity to kiss down the side of his neck until he reached the soft skin, just above his collarbone, where he took his time sucking a dark mark. Sapnap keens under the attention. He grabbed Dream by the shirt and pulled him in for another harsh kiss that was just as much teeth as it was passion.

He reached down, pushing his hands up under Dream’s shirt to feel the expanse of his chest beneath his fingers. When he found the fabric too restrictive, he began to tear at the buttons, desperate to get them undone. Sapnap wanted a reaction from Dream, and he got it in the form of a possessive growl.

Sapnap's eyes flew open instinctively, even if he couldn't see Dream's face, he could feel the intensity of his gaze on his own face. Dream's hair was a mess and he had tension in his shoulders like he was holding back from giving Sapnap *more*.

He shouldn't have been able to see the shape of Dream's hair. Sapnap's eyes widened and he slapped a hand over Dream's face before the approaching light could get bright enough to illuminate his features. Dream reeled backwards, obviously not expecting the strike.

"Wha-?" Dream stuttered out, visibly confused. With his ability to see in the dark, he probably didn't even realize the space was getting brighter.

"Mask!" Sapnap rasped out loud, his voice rough from overwhelming need.

Dream fumbled for his mask and Sapnap closed his eyes to give his boyfriend a chance to slip it on. A grateful kiss was pressed to his lips and Sapnap knew it was thanks for letting Dream keep his secrets.

They turned towards the source of the light just in time to see George rounding the corner with a torch in hand. He must have come looking for them when they didn't return to their campsite for dinner.

George tripped over a rock and stumbled. "You guys certainly made yourselves hard to find. I had to double back like five times to avoid mobs coming to look for you."

Sapnap cleared his throat. "How did you get past them?"

"How do you think, idiot?" So today was one of George's better days with clairvoyance, when he actually had some semblance of control over his powers. George brushed the dirt from his pants and finally looked up at his boyfriends.

He immediately burst into laughter.

"I see you guys had fun down here." George sounded so smug as he spoke, making Sapnap cast a glance over at Dream and took in his ruffled appearance. His hair was wild and out of place and his shirt was hastily buttoned completely wrong. If Sapnap hadn't known better, he would have been convinced that Dream had just had sex. He didn't even want to know how his own appearance matched Dream's dishevelment.

For once in their lives, Dream and Sapnap were too embarrassed to reply.

## Chapter End Notes

I was so unhappy with this chapter that I literally broke my "no editing why tf would I do that" policy just to rewrite the same few sentences like 20 times. It's honestly because I feel like the whole making out scene ain't that great, is it too much? Is it not enough? Idk I don't like kissing myself so I just struggle with writing it.

# Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap's parents are dead. A passage in a stolen book offers him a second chance and he clings to it desperately. They're dead, but that doesn't mean they're gone for good.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

Hooooo boy this was a long fucking chapter. I'm going to be honest, I wrote a majority of this at like 3am when I was too tired to feel anything, so I hope this is actually as heart breaking as I meant it to be.

I would also like to point out that autocorrect has been fucking me over, trying to spell things like artefact and phenominon, so if I missed any of those, ignore it. I don't do editing over petty things like spelling and grammar.

EDIT: @Eggmug1 on twitter made art of this chapter!!!! Please go check it out I am in love!!!!!!

<https://twitter.com/Eggmug1/status/1354090310167478272?s=20>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sapnap read and reread the book's entry, memorizing every detail, searching for some sort of hint, a *clue*, to the meaning of the words. He was desperate for more information and when the book didn't yield anything during his nth read, he grew frustrated. The book was an encyclopedia of magical artifacts, a first edition in fact, which was probably why Sapnap had stolen it in the first place. It was exactly the kind of book his mother would have loved to get her hands on.

Not that it mattered anymore, Sapnap's parents are dead, and despite the weeks of running and harassment for being a kid on his own, he could still feel the dirt and ash under his fingers from digging two shallow graves with his bare hands. There hadn't really been anything left to bury.

The book was filled with entries on hundreds of incredibly powerful artifacts; a cape that allows the wearer to fly, a pearl that can make the wielder teleport, boots used for walking on water. All of those would sound enticing to a twelve year old boy, except Sapnap didn't care about any of them. He only wanted to find the mirror.

It was called a spirit's mirror and it was special because anyone who looked into its reflection could use it to speak with the dead. For a twelve year old boy, Sapnap had an extraordinary amount of dead he would like to speak to.

After two weeks of reading the encyclopedia from cover to cover many times over in every moment he had a chance, while tucked into the back of a wagon between a sack of potatoes and a

chicken cage, while taking shelter under the eaves of the porch of an abandoned cabin in a thunderstorm, while walking aimlessly through the streets of different cities, different towns, on the roads between them when he couldn't find a ride, once the spine had cracked and the binding was so worn that if Sapnap decided to drop the book, it would effortlessly fall open to the mirror's entry, Sapnap finally found a lead to the mirror's location. It came in the form of an old bookstore located just outside of the market district.

At first, Sapnap didn't even notice the shop, it blended in neatly with the worn stone exterior of the building, but the rattle of a bell as someone pushed open the door and left the shop drew his attention. The sign with the name of the shop was so worn that he couldn't make out the name and through the window Sapnap could see rows and rows of bookshelves illuminated only by dim lantern light. Something in his chest twisted, but he grabbed the handle of the door anyways.

His head spun when the nostalgic smell reached his nose. The smell of fresh parchment and book glue, the lingering smoke of candles that had been burning for what could have been years straight, it was so familiar that it made Sapnap's chest hurt. It took him a second to realize that his chest hurt because he couldn't breathe, no matter how deep his breaths were, he wasn't getting enough air. There was an invisible weight sitting on his chest that was so *so* heavy.

Sapnap ran from the shop as fast as his legs could take him. He couldn't see anything, couldn't hear anything, it could have been minutes later, or even hours, before the ringing in his ears stopped and Sapnap could finally focus on his shaking hands.

He laced his fingers together and gripped tightly to make them stop shaking. It was scary to know that the memory of his parents held so much power over him that just the smell of a bookshop that reminded him so much of home could send him into a complete panic.

His face was dry. Even in the desperate flash of emotion, Sapnap hadn't cried. He didn't even think he could cry anymore, not after everything that happened, not after finding out about the mirror.

Sapnap's parents died right in front of his eyes and he didn't even cry once. He wouldn't. Not when there was still a way out there for him to see them again. They weren't gone and he refused to mourn them like they were.

Eventually, a very long time later, Sapnap's breathing was even again and his hands no longer shook, so he climbed to his feet and took a look at his surroundings. The sun was setting, so it had been a few hours since he first spotted the shop, and he didn't recognize any of his surroundings. At least he was still in the city.

Finding the bookshop again wasn't as hard as he thought it would be. He must have run in circles in his panic because it only took him a few minutes to reach a street that he recognized and even fewer to get back to the bookshop. Sapnap stood outside, staring into the windows for several minutes. All he did was take deep breaths in order to prepare himself, he didn't have the time to run off panicking again, he had a mirror to track down.

He steeled his nerves and gripped the door handle. This time Sapnap barely breathed as he entered the shop, and when he did, it was through his mouth. He could still taste the mustiness of old books in the air, but it was far preferable to being sent into another panic attack from the smell.

The shop was empty except for a lone shopkeeper.

She sat behind the register, completely entranced in a book open on the counter in front of her. It must have been a good book, because she didn't look up at Sapnap, not even as the bell above

him jingled as the door shut behind him. Sapnap was tempted to start searching through the books in the shop on his own and not bother the shopkeeper, but even if Sapnap was experienced enough with books to not mess with the organization system, it would be rude to impose himself upon the shop like that.

“Um, excuse me?” Sapnap asked to get her attention. He approached the counter, but the shopkeeper still didn’t notice him. Sapnap normally wouldn’t mind, he knew that a really good book was hard to put down sometimes, even if he had never personally experienced the phenomenon, he had seen his mom become so invested in a book she didn’t even realize time was passing, but he was also in a bit of a hurry to find information on the mirror.

He glanced down at the book the shopkeeper was reading and was surprised to find that he recognized it. *I’ll Meet You At Endstone Keep*, it was one of his mom’s favorite books about two friends that were torn apart by war and the only way they knew to find each other was to travel to Endstone Keep, a place that only existed in fairytales. Sapnap didn’t understand why his mom liked it so much because she always seemed like an incredibly happy person, but *Endstone Keep* was a tragedy.

“You’re going to cry.” Sapnap said.

“Huh?” The shopkeeper glanced up and startled at the sight of the pyromancer standing directly in front of her. “Oh my goodness! I didn’t hear you come in!” She carefully marked her page and closed the book. “Sorry for the delay, how can I help you?”

“Oh, um, I’m looking for more information on something I read in this book.” Sapnap pulled out the encyclopedia and placed it gently on the counter.

The shopkeeper gestured to the book, “Do you mind if I take a closer look?”

Sapnap shrugged, trying to appear indifferent, but obviously failing because the shopkeeper nodded like she understood and turned around to start searching through drawers in the cabinet behind her. When she faced him again, she was holding a thin pair of gloves. Sapnap recognized the gloves, his mother had owned a similar pair, they were meant to be worn when handling extremely delicate and old books, and by pulling them on, the shopkeeper was showing that she meant to be extremely gentle with the book.

“What page?” The shopkeeper’s voice was soft, but Sapnap could tell she was a no nonsense straight to the point kind of person. He reached over and flipped the book to the page about the mirror without responding.

The shopkeeper leaned over the book and glanced at the title of the entry. Her eyes immediately snapped back up to Sapnap’s face, making him uncomfortable, before looking back at the encyclopedia. She read the entry, with the amount of time she was taking, she was either an incredibly slow reader or was reading the whole thing multiple times. It didn’t help that she kept periodically sending Sapnap worried looks.

“Well?” Sapnap asked finally.

“I-” The shopkeeper began, glancing once more at the book. She seemed so conflicted and Sapnap was tempted to just swipe the book back from her and hightail it out of town considering how cagey she was acting. Her gaze landed back on Sapnap’s face and stayed there for a long while, making him squirm. She must have found what she was looking for because she opened her mouth to speak again. “I have a couple of books that mention mirrors, but I don’t know if any of them are the one you’re looking for. If you give me a few minutes, I can grab them for you?”

The idea of staying in the shop any longer made Sapnap nauseous, but he would stay as long as he needed to if the shopkeeper could help him.

“Sure.” Sapnap replied stiffly. The shopkeeper nodded and scurried around the counter and into the depths of the dimly lit shop. There was a stool near the counter that Sapnap could sit on, but he felt far too restless to relax, especially because he was afraid that if he got too comfortable, he would get thrown into panic once again by how much the store reminded him of his home. He chose to remain standing and just shifted from one foot to the other until the shopkeeper returned.

She came back carrying five books. “These are the only books I have that mention mirrors with any sort of magical property or history, these two are other encyclopedias, this one is a fairytale, this one is a journal written a few hundred years ago, and I don’t know how useful this one will be since it is written in ancient illiger, but it does have an image of a mirror depicted somewhere in it.” She set all five books on the counter in front of Sapnap who looked at them dauntingly. “If you don’t want to buy all five, I can help you go through them to see if any will be useful. That way, at least, you won’t be wasting your money.”

“I-Okay.”

“Grab that stool, reading while standing up is no good for you.” The shopkeeper pointed at the stool that Sapnap had been ignoring. Sheepishly, he dragged it over to the counter and the two of them began flipping through the books.

The two encyclopedias were useless, both only mentioning mirrors that could be used to see across long distances in some way or another, not the dead. The fairytale had a mirror that was exactly like the one described in Sapnap’s book, but it had less information than Sapnap already had from the encyclopedia alone. The tome written in ancient illiger was interesting, but neither he nor the shopkeeper knew how to read it and even worse, neither of them knew someone who could translate it anyways. Sapnap set it aside as a last resort.

It was the journal that finally yielded answers.

The journal was a personal one kept by some guy named King Eret who the shopkeeper assured Sapnap was a very famous king, at least in the part of the continent that he used to rule. Sapnap, who was not a local, had no clue who the guy was and chose to trust her assessment. One of the journal entries detailed a day when a foreign emissary came to visit King Eret and brought gifts from his home country to get the king’s favor. All of the gifts were a bunch of extravagant nonsense that Sapnap didn’t care about, all except for an unusual mirror that King Eret described as magical in nature and with features that were identical to the depiction of the spirit’s mirror in Sapnap’s book.

“This is it! This is definitely it!” Sapnap exclaimed. He finally had a lead on the mirror’s location.

The shopkeeper only nodded and moved the four other books to the side. “Well, do you need any other information while you’re here?” It was obvious to Sapnap that she knew exactly what he was doing, looking for a mirror that could be used to speak with the dead, but she was pretending like he wasn’t going to go traipsing off into the wilderness to treasure hunt. It was probably for her own peace of mind. Most people didn’t like it when kids like Sapnap did dangerous things, even worse when kids like Sapnap didn’t have anyone to stop them from doing dangerous things anymore.

“No. I’m good.” He didn’t want to give her a chance to talk him out of looking for King Eret’s castle.



The shopkeeper chewed on her lip. "Wait here for just one second." She scurried off again. Sapnap, for a reason he didn't care to acknowledge, actually stayed where he sat in the stool instead of taking the journal and making a run for it. The shopkeeper returned holding a rainproof bag that she put Sapnap's encyclopedia and King Eret's journal into and handed it to him. "Take this."

"What? But I- I can't afford this." Sapnap replied, instinctively grabbing the bag as it was shoved into his hands.

"I know. But you look like you need it more than my shop does." The shopkeeper's smile was so fond that Sapnap had to silently remind himself over and over that her hair was bright red instead of a familiar glossy black.

Sapnap swallowed heavily and clutched the bag to his chest. He wanted to leave, but for some reason he couldn't get his legs to obey his mind. For some reason it felt wrong to just go. His eyes fell back on the counter where the copy of *Endstone Keep* had been pushed aside when Sapnap entered the shop.

"There's a sequel you know." He said suddenly.

"What?"

"Of *Endstone Keep*." Sapnap elaborated, "There's a sequel told from the perspective of the other friend. Not many copies were published, so it's really rare."

"And how do you know this? *Endstone Keep* seems a bit above your reading level." It was true. Sapnap was still a kid and *Endstone Keep* was definitely not a children's book, but his mom read it to him at his request when he discovered it was her favorite book.

"It was my mom's favorite."

"Huh. I'll keep that in mind. What's the sequel called?"

"*I'll See You At The Brightest Dawn*."

The shopkeeper picked up a quill and scribbled out a note, obviously to remind herself of the book's title later. "It's a sad book, isn't it?"

"What?"

"*Endstone Keep*. It's sad. You said I would cry." It surprised Sapnap that she had actually heard him.

He could have answered her, but even as young as he was, less than half the shopkeeper's age, he knew better than to spoil the end of a book, at least, spoil it any further than he already had. He knew from experience that *Endstone Keep* seemed like an incredibly charming novel about a boy set on reuniting with his best friend, but it ended so abruptly with the main character finding out his friend died before they could ever meet again only paragraphs before the end of the book. He didn't know what to say, so Sapnap just shrugged and left the shop without another word.

~

It wasn't until the next morning that Sapnap realized he should have done a better job thanking the shopkeeper. He had opened the bag to find there were three books inside instead of the two he had expected. The third book was a biography on King Eret and included all sorts of information on

the man's life. Most importantly, it included information on where he lived.

From what he could tell, the remains of King Eret's castle were about a two day ride from the city. Unfortunately, Sapnap didn't have a horse and was too young to buy one even if he had the money for it, so he would have to walk. He figured it would take him about six days to get there, five if he really hurried.

The trip was mostly uneventful. In fact, Sapnap wasn't even quite sure how much time passed, his days were filled entirely with walking towards a single point with only one thought in his head. *Soon. I'll see them soon.*

He emerged from his hazy state, finally able to focus on something, anything, other than walking, when he reached the castle doors. They towered over him, and despite how they hung crookedly from the frame and how the wood looked so rotted and frail with age, Sapnap found their size to be incredibly intimidating. Still, he made it this far. He wasn't going to turn around now.

The doors were surprisingly sturdy when he pushed them open.

It was dark inside the castle, the only light source being sunlight that filtered in through cracks in the walls and windows that formed after years of disrepair. It was also empty. There were no rugs or curtains or furniture to break up the sounds of Sapnap's footsteps as they echoed through the entire castle. The book the shopkeeper had given Sapnap claimed that the castle had been unoccupied for almost two centuries, and looking around him, Sapnap believed it.

Seeing the castle so empty was infuriating. There had to be something, some sort of clue as to the location of the mirror. Five hours of searching later left Sapnap standing in the middle of the master bedroom, chest heaving, and eyes threatening to tear up in frustration. He couldn't though. He couldn't cry. Sapnap refused to cry, even now, and he would keep refusing to give into the pull of despair until he saw his parent's faces.

Instead of finding solace in misery, Sapnap chose anger. How dare the world be so unfair, how dare the castle be picked clean, how *dare* the mirror be nowhere in sight. Enraged, Sapnap threw out his hands and set the entire room ablaze. His flames were white hot, stronger than he had ever managed to make them while fuelled with anger.

The floorboards groaned from the heat and what little furniture left in the room, already brittle with age, began to crack apart.

A bookshelf collapsed in on itself revealing a staircase leading underground.

All at once, the flames in the room disappeared and Sapnap gasped at the discovery. Maybe his trip to King Eret's castle wasn't in vain.

Carefully, Sapnap trekked down the steps, holding onto the walls for support. They were made of smooth stone that was cool to the touch. If Sapnap hadn't been a pyromancer, he surely would have tripped and fallen down the steep spiral staircase without the flickering light held in his left palm to guide him.

At the bottom of the staircase Sapnap found a treasure room, and by God was it an impressive collection. He ignited the torches lining the walls with a practiced flick of his wrist, illuminating the entire room. The inner thief in him could have cried at the sight. The room was stacked high with chests full of gold and emeralds, precious gems of all kind, the finest rugs and silks, garments that glowed with unknown magical properties, and any kind of valuable Sapnap could imagine.

He ignored it all.

At the far side of the room stood a mirror. It was much taller than Sappnap, by maybe a foot, but not much wider than him. The frame was a deep black that seemed to suck in all the light surrounding it, but intricate swirls of silver that lined the entire thing wrinkled in the torchlight.

He didn't even think before approaching the mirror, wanting, no, *needing* to touch it, to prove that it really was there in front of him, that he had been right. It was surprisingly warm to the touch. He ran his fingers along the frame, staring at it longingly. All he had to do now was figure out how it worked.

Sappnap pressed a palm flat against the reflective surface. "Show me," he begged, "please show me."

The surface of the mirror rippled and Sappnap stepped backwards. His eyes were wide, either with anticipation or anxiousness, he wasn't sure. This was it. He was going to see his parents again.

He's going to see his father's smile, hear his mother's laugh. It's been slowly killing him that he had forgotten to tell them he loved them the last time he saw them alive and now he's going to get another chance.

It isn't his parents that appear on the mirror's surface.

King Eret looked exhausted with sickly pale skin and the darkest imprints under his eyes that Sappnap had ever seen on a person. In the book Sappnap got from the shopkeeper about the life of King Eret, there was a passage on his death. He had died peacefully in his sleep. Looking at his appearance, Sappnap didn't believe a word of it. King Eret looked too young to just die in his sleep, and the blue hue to his skin around his mouth and lips insinuated a far more sinister cause for his early death.

"Who are you?" King Eret's eyebrows were knitted together in confusion.

"Why is the mirror showing you? I don't even know you. It's supposed to show me my parents." He snapped, completely ignoring the king's question.

"What?"

"I said, why are you here?"

King Eret folded his arms and glared. He obviously wasn't a fan of getting attitude from a child. "It's not like I asked to be. You must have summoned me."

"But I wasn't trying to summon you!"

"Then why the hell would you use this stupid mirror?"

Sappnap's voice cracked, "I was trying to see my parents!" He felt anxiety creeping in his chest, making it difficult to breathe. Why, why, why, *why* was King Eret standing there in place of his parents?

The king's expression softened and the look of sympathy he gave to the younger boy made Sappnap want to punch a wall. The torches in the room seemed to glow brighter as the pyromancer struggled to keep his anger in check.

"You can't use this mirror to see your parents." King Eret spoke so softly, his voice barely above a

whisper, but to Sapnap, it couldn't have been louder. The words rang in his ears.

“What do you mean? You're lying! This mirror allows people to speak with the dead. My parents are dead, I should be able to speak with them!”

“Well congratulations. You're currently speaking with the dead, but I'm afraid you won't be able to speak with anyone but me.” King Eret's tone was bitter, but Sapnap couldn't care less about how he felt.

Despite how the temperature in the room rose with Sapnap's temper, his tone was icy. “Why not?”

“It's a soul trap.” King Eret replied as if it was obvious. Sapnap must have looked confused, so he continued. “Anyone who dies while their reflection can be seen in the mirror has their soul trapped inside. The only ghosts you can speak with are the ones who died in front of this mirror.

Unfortunately, I'm the only one left that is coherent enough to hold a conversation. It turns out and eternity of being imprisoned in a mirror really does a number on your sanity.”

The information was delivered so casually, like it meant nothing, but it left Sapnap feeling like he just took a fatal blow. Distantly, he was aware that King Eret was still talking to him, but all Sapnap could hear was a ringing in his ears. His world was shaken to the core and he wasn't sure he would ever regain his balance.

“Hey! Kid! Are you alright?” Sapnap startled. His sudden panic was replaced by complete and total emptiness. He was numb to the world.

“I'm fine.” He didn't sound fine.

King Eret, now realizing he had Sapnap's attention again, began speaking again. “Listen, kid, I need you to do me a favor.” When Sapnap didn't reply, he forged on. “You have to break the mirror.”

“What?” Sapnap's surprise forced a reply out of him before he even realized he was speaking. “Why?”

“I've been trapped in this mirror for *centuries*.” The king laughed, but it sounded incredibly bitter. “I don't think my sanity will last for much longer. I can't take it anymore. The loneliness would kill me if I weren't already dead.”

“But, what will happen to you then?” It wasn't like he cared, at least that's what Sapnap told himself.

“I don't care. Anything is better than being trapped for a second longer. I will gladly accept oblivion over this fucking prison.”

It would be easy to shatter the mirror, it wasn't exactly made to be sturdy, but Sapnap couldn't do it. Even if he wanted to, he just *couldn't*. He was still holding onto hope that King Eret was wrong, that he could use the mirror to speak with his parents once again. He had to be wrong. All of Sapnap's effort to find the stupid thing couldn't be in vain. It just couldn't.

King Eret sensed the pyromancer's hesitation and he looked furious. “What do you even care? You're just a pathetic fucking kid with dead par-”

He disappeared. Sapnap blinked in surprise at his own bloody fist that was smashed through a hole in the mirror where King Eret's head used to be. He had reacted instinctively, wanting nothing more than to hurt the king. Instead he gave the older man exactly what he wanted. When Sapnap

pulled his hand back, dripping with blood, the mirror tilted backwards and shattered completely on impact with the ground.

The numbness became all encompassing and Sarnap could no longer ignore it now that he was alone in the treasure room filled with valuables that meant absolutely nothing to the pyromancer. They could be piles of ashes for all he cared.

Sarnap stared at the mirror shards, reflecting the flickering light of the burning torches that lined the walls until the flames danced in his eyes like a pyre. His parents were dead, they died on a Sunday only hours after he had screamed at them about how life was so unfair and how much he hated them. They were dead and he was never going to be able to see them again. They were dead and he had to give them up.

Sarnap stared at the mirror shards, reflecting a distorted image of his face, and he began to cry.

## Chapter End Notes

If you cried then I did my job right. If not, I blame the sleep deprivation for my inferior writing skills.

Quick thing about chapters 11 and 12. So far they're both really short, like maybe 1,000 words each, and they are about conversations that cover pretty much the same topic, but take place at different times, so I'll probably post them both at the same time since they feel very much like they belong in the same chapter.

EDIT: @Eggmug1 on twitter made art of this chapter!!!! Please go check it out I am in love!!!!!!

<https://twitter.com/Eggmug1/status/1354090310167478272?s=20>

# **I Don't Know You Except When I Do**

## Chapter Summary

George asks Dream what he's looking for.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

TWO CHAPTERS IN ONE DAY???? THREE CHAPTERS IN ONE WEEKEND???? Wild.

It's in the way Dream spends a lot of time staring at the horizon, when the sun is setting and the entire sky is blushing, when it's late at night and he is the only one who can see past the circle of light their campfire affords, when George sometimes wakes up just a little too early and he watches Dream sit in the morning light and stare into the distance for a short while until sleep catches him once again. George doesn't know when he realized Dream had this habit, but he does know that it seems like the only time the masked man ever lets his guard down.

Whenever George wasn't busy with his turn either cooking or cleaning or packing up camp alongside Sapnap and he happened to notice Dream gazing into the distance, he let himself stare shamelessly at the blonde, memorizing all of his features. At first he did it because he wanted to know more about the masked man, then he did it because he loves Dream, and now, so soon after Dream had been sick and George had been scared for the blonde's life, he stared because he was scared he wouldn't be able to for much longer.

If Sapnap ever noticed the staring, he never said anything.

Eventually, as they always did while staring at Dream, George's thoughts would wander away from memorizing the line of his shoulders and slope of his neck and he would begin to think about what Dream was looking at. George knew that it wasn't possible for Dream to see beyond the horizon no matter how good his eyesight was. Sapnap had told him once that the whole world was round and if you went in one direction for a really long time you would end up exactly where you started so the horizon was basically the edge of the earth you could see and to see any further you would have to either get taller or move closer. If there was nothing for Dream to see, then why did he spend day after day staring at the horizon like it held all the answers? What answers was he looking for?

So when the three of them stopped one afternoon to set up camp and rest for a few days, and Dream, a few yards from camp sitting on a boulder near the edge of a cliff, turned to the horizon to stare, George began to wonder. The older man glanced at Sapnap who had his nose in a book, quite literally, with the pyromancer fast asleep with an open book settled on his face, and he decided he had done enough wondering.

George imagined that Sapnap had either asked Dream the same questions about his motivations a long time ago and never got an answer or had decided that even if he did ask, the masked man wouldn't reply. The thing about George was that he didn't care if Dream wasn't going to answer, he would always ask anyways.

"Can I ask you something?" George asked quietly as he sat down on the boulder a few feet away from his boyfriend. Dream didn't look at him, but George could tell he was listening from the way the masked man tilted his head in his direction.

"I guess." Dream's voice was rough with disuse. George suddenly realized he hadn't actually heard his masked boyfriend speak at all since the night before and immediately felt guilty. Normally he and Sapnap were good about dragging Dream into conversations when he seemed a little more contemplative than normal. "If I can ask you something too."

George nodded, agreeing. "Why are you always staring at the horizon? What are you looking for?"

Dream was silent for a really long time after that. George didn't mind, he was content to wait for his boyfriend to come up with the words to answer, and if he didn't want to answer, then the older boy would leave him alone. Even if he was a naturally pushy person, he didn't want to make the masked man uncomfortable by ignoring his boundaries. "I'm looking for a way back, I guess." He finally answered.

"Home?"

Dream hummed noncommittally, "You could call it that."

George's eyebrows knitted together in confusion, "What does that mean?"

"That's your third question Georgie, are you sure you want to keep asking? Because my questions won't be nice either."

"Yes." George answered, "There, I answered one of your questions. Now unless you answer my last one, I only owe you one." He shot his masked boyfriend an icy glare. At this point he had known his boyfriend for too long, he wasn't going to be able to pull a fast one on George as easily as he used to.

Dream laughed, "You're getting too clever for me baby." George flushed at the pet name, his entire face turning bright red, making Dream only laugh harder.

"You're such a dick."

"Your dick." Dream said and burst into another fit of laughter.

"I already have a perfectly functioning dick, thank you very much."

Dream grinned like the cat who caught the canary, "I'll bet you do." His words carried so much insinuation that George, impossibly, turned even redder than before.

"Oh my god, shut up!"

"What?" Dream laughed. "I was talking about Sapnap, what were you thinking of?" He said it like he wasn't already perfectly aware of what George was thinking about. Dream snapped his fingers, as though he suddenly understood the joke. "George! How could you? You have such impure thoughts! Sapnap would be scandalized!"

“I’m going to kill you.” George replied, burying his face in his hands.

Dream’s laughter trailed off and when George looked up at his boyfriend, he was surprised to see the mask turned towards him instead of the horizon. It was the first time in years that George found it unnerving. Dream’s hand reaches out and snags one of George’s before the older man has a chance to react. He studies George’s hand for a moment, straightening and bending each finger, inspecting each cuticle, delicately tracing the lines of his palm, before lacing their fingers together and letting their joined hands rest between them.

“It means that it hasn’t been home to me. Not for a long time.”

George thinks he understands what Dream is trying to say. His village hadn’t been home to him for a long time, probably hadn’t even before he met Dream and Sapnap in the first place. He still had a home though. It felt a little bit like fingers intertwined with his own and sleeping peacefully through the night with soft exhales on either side of him, like yelling and shouting and wheezing laughter, like knowing two people better than he knows himself yet still managing to be surprised by them every day. It felt a little bit like being in love.

“Then why do you want to go back?” George feels the muscles in Dream’s hand stiffen and he knows he asked the wrong thing. Still, he pushes forward. “You’re looking for a cure. For those markings, right?” Even though he phrased it as a question, he didn’t say it like one. If anything, George was using their innocent game as a way to share with Dream what he already suspects, that Dream hadn’t gotten sick on their way to Bolson because he was *already* sick.

“I don’t think I want to answer any more questions Georgie.” Dream’s voice was barely above a whisper.

George gave Dream’s hand a reassuring squeeze. “It’s your turn to ask anyways. You still have two.”

Dream nodded, but he remained quiet for a few minutes. George let him be, not having any desire to rush the masked man.

When Dream finally broke the silence, George almost wished he hadn’t. “Why do you pretend that you’re not scared of Sapnap anymore?” The worst part was that George knew his question was genuine, that he truly didn’t understand how humans experienced love despite being able to feel it himself.

“Because he didn’t do anything wrong.” It was true. It wasn’t Sapnap’s fault in the slightest, but George couldn’t control his emotions. He couldn’t just choose to stop feeling something just because he wanted to. George suspects that was how emotions work for Dream, that he could choose to stop feeling something just because he wanted to and that was why he struggled with all of his boyfriends’ negative emotions. “Because I love him more than I am afraid of him.”

“I don’t understand.” And that was why, no matter how human Dream looked, George would never be able to mistake him for one.

“I know you don’t.”

“Humans are really weird.”

“So are you.” George replied, “You still have one more question.”

Dream pulled their linked hands towards him and used his free hand to push up his mask until his mouth was exposed. George never got tired of seeing his mouth, the one glimpse of his face he



would willingly give to his boyfriends. It felt sacred. Hell, it *was* sacred. A view that was meant only for him and Sapnap. Dream pressed a soft kiss to the back of George's hand, "I think I'll save my question if that's alright."

George nodded, "It's more than alright."

This time, when Dream turned back towards the horizon, George scooted closer so that they were pressed together from shoulder to knee and watched the horizon with him.

# If You Cry A Little Harder It Might Make Sense

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap asks Dream about his family.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George was in town shopping and Dream was panicking because Sapnap was crying. Dream wasn't always well versed in human emotions, but he knew that when humans cried, it was because they needed something. He needed advice, but the only human around he could ask for advice was the one crying. Dream decided to ask anyways.

“Sapnap? What do you need?” Sapnap only started crying harder. Why did humans have to be so confusing?

After Sapnap had almost died a few days earlier, George had taken Dream aside and warned him that even though Sapnap seemed fine, he wasn't, and it was worrying that he was trying to hide it. Dream didn't really believe George because Sapnap was acting like his normal self, but George was insistent that Dream had to be careful because eventually Sapnap's facade would shatter.

Well shatter it did, and during the only time in days that George was not around to console him. Did Dream mention he was panicking? Because he was.

“Seriously Sapnap? It's like- It's okay man. You're alright.” Dream winced at his own words. He was trying to copy how Sapnap and George sounded when they tried to comfort each other, but even he could tell he was way off the mark.

Next he squatted down next to where he was curled up on the ground and tried to pat Sapnap on the back like he had seen George do once, or maybe it was more like a rubbing motion? Either way, Dream was so scared he was going to break the crying boy that he ended up just awkwardly touching the pyromancer on the back near his shoulder. Dream was starting to regret how he normally ran away and let George and Sapnap sort each other out whenever one of them got emotional, he could have really used some sort of guidance.

“Are you sure you're sad?” Dream asked.

That must have been the right thing to say, because Sapnap's cries broke off into a watery laugh. Good, he stopped crying, Dream could work with that. He poked Sapnap's cheek, then did it again when the pyromancer didn't look at him. After about four pokes, Sapnap turned to glare at Dream. He looked *awful*. His whole face was red and splotchy, his eyes were bloodshot and nose runny, not to mention the tears that were still spilling over his face no matter how quickly Sapnap tried to wipe them away.

Dream gently grabbed Sapnap's face with both hands and began wiping away the tears with his

thumbs. When new tears fell, Dream just kept wiping them away until Sapnap's breathing had calmed a little. "Want to tell me why we're crying?"

"Don't say it like you're crying too." Sapnap's voice was rough after crying for several minutes and at the sound of his own voice, his face screwed up like he was going to begin sobbing once again.

"Whoa whoa whoa, no, shh, it's okay." Dream said quickly and began trying to smooth out the muscles in Sapnap's face with his thumbs like that would stop him from crying. He honestly didn't know what he would do if Sapnap started crying again, he just didn't know how to handle the uncontrollable emotions of humans. "None of that, I think you've cried enough. Why is crying even a thing? It can't be good for humans to lose that much water." It must have worked because Sapnap started laughing again.

"M'sorry." Sapnap whispered. Dream would have missed it if he wasn't already inches from the pyromancer's face. "I didn't mean to."

"S'not your fault. Humans are just made that way."

"No, I-" Sapnap sniffled, "I meant I'm sorry for crying."

Now that just confused Dream. "Why?" He didn't understand why humans would feel sorry for something they couldn't control like emotions.

"B-because." He whined and tried to pull away, but Dream didn't let him. It was becoming very apparent to the masked man that Sapnap didn't know why he was sorry either.

"Okay, then why are you crying?"

"I-It's stupid."

Dream frowned. "Why would it be stupid? It made you cry."

"It's just-" Sapnap gestured vaguely in the direction of his bag. When Dream realized he wasn't going to get a more substantive answer than that, he looked over towards the bag himself to investigate. Sapnap's bag looked normal to him, spilled open and messy as always, but with a closer look Dream could see that the books Sapnap had in his bag were falling apart and the pages seemed to be missing large chunks. One of the books he had collected probably had bookworms and now his whole collection had been destroyed by a bunch of bugs. Still, it was odd for Sapnap to be so upset, especially when the pyromancer regularly lost or gave away his books at the same rate he stole them. Even if they hadn't been destroyed by bookworms, Sapnap would have replaced all of them with entirely new books in less than a week.

Dream turned back to Sapnap who still looked seconds away from bursting into tears. "That's not really why you're crying, is it?"

This had the effect of making Sapnap stop and think. Which was good. If he was busy thinking, then he would be too busy to cry, right? At least that was how Dream hoped it worked.

"No." He hiccuped, at least he was being honest.

"Then why?"

Sapnap scrunched his nose, and if Dream wasn't still panicking about the pyromancer's precarious mood, he would stop to think about how cute it was. "I'm scared," His voice wobbled, "I miss my

mom.”

Dream couldn't do anything about Sapnap's mom, she was long gone, but he could help Sapnap feel safe. That, at least, was something he had experience in. He finally let go of Sapnap's face in order to maneuver them to a log where Dream sat on the ground with his back against the fallen tree and pulled Sapnap into his lap so the pyromancer was using him as a backrest. They sat like that in silence for a long while until Sapnap's face dried and his breathing evened out.

“Dream?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you miss your family?” Dream's arms tightened around Sapnap. He had been caught completely off guard by the question.

It took him a while to think about the answer, but the truth was, he didn't think about his family at all. Dream didn't feel loss, or grief, or sadness, he didn't feel a lot of things really, at least, he didn't feel them the same way humans did. It garnered him a lot of pity, but if Dream has learned anything by spending time with humans, it's that they have created thousands of different ways to say the same thing but only have one way to feel something. Where Dream came from, it was the opposite.

“There's nothing for me to miss.” He finally answered. The masked man could tell that Sapnap was annoyed at getting only another cryptic answer, but there really wasn't much else Dream could say.

Eventually Sapnap began to doze off. He had to be tired after spending so long just absolutely bawling his eyes out, and Dream was content with sitting there and being used as a pillow. That's how George found them when he returned from town carrying a paper bag full of various baked goods and supplies, Sapnap fast asleep and Dream humming to himself to pass the time.

George took one look at Sapnap's face and stopped in his tracks. “He's been crying.” Dream blinked, surprised that George had been able to tell so quickly.

“Yeah. I handled it though.” Dream was actually quite proud that he had successfully managed to calm Sapnap down. George was significantly less impressed.

“Really? You did?”

“Who else could have?” Dream fired back.

George raised a single eyebrow and glanced around their camp, when he didn't spot anyone else, he was forced to concede that point. Dream would have been more offended if he weren't just as surprised as George that he managed to navigate human emotions.

“Don't give him too much credit,” Sapnap grunted without opening his eyes and shifted around to get more comfortable, “he sucked at it.”

Dream threw a stick at George when he laughed.

We're finally at the prologue of the actual plot!!!! Chapters 16 + 19-21 are the exposition with some meat on it and later chapters will have more plot stuff, but I'm definitely taking my time.

# Even If I Said Goodbye

## Chapter Summary

Dream wakes up in a strange place with strange people that speak a strange language. He learns.

Author's note: Any italicized dialogue is in another language.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

This was a long one folks. More than 3 times the length of my normal 3-4k chapters. But guess what? We finally have some answers about Dream!

I picked some slightly unconventional choices for Dream's first friends, but since this chapter largely features Bad, I figured I would pick people that are closer to him and Skeppy. I would have picked people from the Dream SMP, but I have a plan for them in a future chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream had never worked harder to take a single step. Everything felt heavy from the air, to his limbs, to gravity pushing down on him. The squelch of the mud and Dream's heavy breathing were the only sounds in the swamp. It was unsettling, not even a breeze or the sound of animals for miles. The mud was so thick too. It reached almost to Dream's knees and he had to lift his leg almost to his chest for every step, making the trek beyond exhausting. The thing that was crawling across his chest didn't help either.

It was so *bright*. Even with the mask shielding his face, the bright sun illuminated the overworld in a way that made keeping his eyes open painful. Dream had only ever heard about the sun in stories, about its warmth, the light that makes everything in the overworld lush and green. The stories were a big, fat lie. The only thing the sun had done so far was make Dream miserable.

Green though, green was nice. Before today, the only place Dream had seen the color green was his own eyes. Seeing it on the trees and grass, it was quickly becoming his favorite color.

Another step where the mud hugged tighter to his legs than normal had Dream tilting forward, desperately flailing his arms to keep balance. He managed to stay upright, barely. His entire back was already covered in mud from landing in it earlier, and he had no desire to dig himself out of the mud once again.

If Dream had been feeling any better, he would climb up above the swamp and travel by treetops to avoid the treacherous obstacle. He couldn't. Everything hurt too much. Each of his joints ached with every movement, his head was pounding, not to mention, Dream was almost certain that his

wrist was broken.

His chest was the worst. Breathing *burned*. He wished more than anything that air wasn't required for survival because with how much effort it took to just move a single step, his muscles were left screaming for air.

He should have known he wouldn't be able to keep it up for much longer.

Dream didn't even realize he had stopped until the earth was coming up to meet him. After that, everything went dark.

~

He woke wrapped in a large pile of soft blankets. It was dark, the only light coming from a crackling fire across the room. Dream was whole-heartedly confused. Where was he? How did he get here? The most worrying part was the light breeze that came from the window brushing across his face. His bare face.

There was a shuffle of feet behind him and Dream stiffened. He turned cautiously to face whoever was there, no doubt the person who had stolen his mask, and opened his mouth to speak, not that he was entirely sure what to say. Should he demand his mask back? Thank him for his help?

*"Oh good, you're awake!"* Any words Dream wanted to say died on his lips at the stranger's cheery tone and odd accent. He had his back to Dream and he looked like he was busy with something, but Dream couldn't tell what.

Dream didn't know much about humans, but he could already tell that this man was unusual. He hadn't even looked at Dream. *"How did you know?"*

*"Hmm?"*

*"How did you know that I was awake?"* He clarified.

*"Well,"* The stranger paused what he was doing and looked up, but still didn't turn to face Dream, *"you were staring."*

*"And you could tell?"*

*"What?"*

At this point, Dream was getting frustrated with the stranger. Did Dream need to repeat everything he said? *"How can you tell just because I was staring?"* He snapped.

The stranger finally turned towards Dream, but he kept his eyes averted, not looking at his face. *"Can you speak slower? I speak Ender, but not very well."*

Dream was baffled. *"Ender? What's that?"*

*"Do you not know what your own language is called?"* The stranger sounded shocked.

*"What's a language?"* Dream repeated the word slowly to make sure he pronounced it correctly. The stranger muttered something that sounded like complete gibberish and shook his head.

*"It's how people communicate. In the Overworld everyone speaks a language called English."* It didn't make any sense to Dream, but he knew better than to ask for a better explanation, there was just no way that the stranger would be able to explain any better. The stranger turned back around

to keep working on whatever his project was when Dream didn't respond. *"My name is Bad, what's your name?"*

"Dream." He replied, surprising himself with how willing he was to share the information. Bad laughed, confusing Dream. *"What's so funny?"*

*"Your name sounds like an English word that means dream."*

*"But that's not what my name means."*

*"I know that, but different languages have different sounding words that mean the same thing."* That made a little more sense than Bad's initial explanation, but he was still a bit confused.

*"Then what does my name sound like in English?"*

"Dirt?" Bad sounded unsure. *"No wait, Clay."*

"Clay." Dream repeated, trying the syllable out with his tongue. "Clay, clay, clay, clay, clay."

*"So, Dream, what are you doing in the overworld?"*

*"How do you know I'm not from the overworld?"*

*"Other than the fact that you don't speak English? This was a pretty dead giveaway."* Bad turned and tossed something in Dream's direction. Dream caught it instinctively. It was his mask, now sporting a crack through the center. He must have broken it when he passed out in the swamp, Bad had been fixing it. It was a traditional Ender mask made of purpur and covered in intricately carved designs. Dream carefully put it on, not sure how well the fix Bad made would hold. He was grateful that Bad had made an effort to not look at his face and also took the time to fix his mask. He would have had to make a new one eventually, he had the mask since he was only a kid and pretty soon the mask would be too small.

*"Do people not wear masks in the overworld?"*

*"Not usually, not unless they're planning to cause some trouble."* Dream didn't understand. He was taught that faces were sacred, that showing yours to anyone, even family, was dangerous unless under the right circumstances. Dream didn't understand why, but he knew that people who showed their face to someone else changed, and they never went back to normal. *"Anyways, I was waiting for you to wake up to eat dinner. I made rabbit stew and left it on the stove to keep warm until you were up."*

"Rabbit stew?" Dream hadn't heard of it before.

*"I bet you'll like it. Come on, come sit at the table."* Bad made shooing motions with his arms and herded Dream into a seat at the table in the next room. Before long, Dream had a plate of some sort of chunky brown sludge sitting in front of him. It smelled good, but it looked less than appetizing in the masked boy's opinion. *"Go on, dig in."* Bad said, sitting across from Dream with his own plate. Unsure, but curious, Dream pushed up his mask slightly to expose his mouth and took a bite.

He *loved* rabbit stew, Dream decided. It was so much better than the food Dream was used to like chorus fruit and endermite. Despite Bad being a near stranger, Dream had already decided he was his favorite person just for introducing him to rabbit stew. Bad grinned when Dream began to eat enthusiastically before beginning to eat the stew himself.



~

Over the next few days, the two of them slowly began to learn how to coexist. Dream was constantly afraid of getting kicked out of Bad's home, the man hadn't exactly extended an offer to stay, but Dream didn't exactly have anywhere else to go. His fear wasn't enough to get him to behave. Bad was constantly shouting at him for tracking mud into the house, scaring his chickens unnecessarily, swearing, climbing on the roof, basically anything Dream considered fun.

Bad also insisted on teaching Dream English and about human culture. The lessons were extremely boring and Dream found himself constantly trying to come up with excuses to avoid them, but Bad was proving to be an excellent child wrangler.

"Hello. My name is Bad. What is your name?" Bad spoke slowly in English, like that would make it any easier for Dream. He wasn't slow, he just wasn't used to learning a new language.

"My name is Dream." He responded without skipping a beat, silently wishing for the torture to be over. *"Can we be done now? This is so fucking boring."*

"Language!" Bad shouted. Dream wasn't quite sure what it meant, but Bad said it every time he swore, so it wasn't hard to figure it out. "Speak English."

Dream groaned in frustration, but continued. "Hello Bad, what are we having for dinner?"

"We are having chicken pot pie."

Dream frowned. "What is chicken pot pie?"

"It is pie with chicken stew filling."

Dream's frown deepened. "What is pie?"

Bad sighed which only made Dream more frustrated. If he wanted to have a conversation in English, then he should only use words that Dream knew! It wasn't like Dream could teach himself anything.

*"Explain in Ender or change the subject."* He snapped in Ender.

Bad's chest puffed up in annoyance, but he continued anyway. "How old are you Dream?"

"I am ten years old, what about you?"

*"It's rude to ask someone older than you their age."*

*"I thought we were only speaking in English."* Dream replied sweetly, knowing exactly what he had done.

*"Whatever. It's almost dinnertime anyway."*

~

Dream's mask broke again. He was expecting it, whatever Bad had done to fix it the first time wasn't going to hold forever after all. Bad was respectful enough to not look at Dream's face, which he was grateful for, and even went as far as giving Dream the materials to carve a new mask.

Dream had never carved a mask before.

His dad had carved all his previous masks and it was made extremely obvious as Dream began putting the finishing touches on his new mask. His new mask was a simple white with a crudely drawn smiley face carved into it.

Once his mask was complete and securely covering his face, Bad found Dream sitting above the eaves of the front porch with the pieces of his old purpur mask cradled in his hands. Bad must have sensed something because instead of yelling at Dream to climb down, he hauled himself up onto the roof and sat beside the masked boy.

*"I'm sorry that your mask broke."*

Dream made a face. *"I guess it looked pretty cool, but it's just a mask."*

Bad made a strangled sound in his throat. *"No, I meant—"* He sighed like he did when he didn't know how to explain a certain English word to Dream, *"That mask was important to you, right? I'm sorry you lost something important to you. It's okay to feel sad about it."*

Dream blinked owlishly at Bad. Feel sad about it? "I don't know how." For some reason, speaking in English felt appropriate.

"You don't know how to feel sad?" For some reason, Bad looked at him with pity.

"I never learned how to. Besides, who wants to feel sad anyways?" Something Dream had learned during the past few months with Bad was that humans felt emotions much differently than Dream did. They did it wrong. It was like Bad could never control himself, always feeling things without any rhyme or reason.

"You don't learn how to feel emotions you muffin. You just feel them." Bad's words didn't make any sense to Dream, emotions were something you had to learn, but Bad seemed to be implying that he could feel them all along.

"I've never felt sad because I never learned how." Dream repeated. He felt annoyed and frustrated at the older man and the way that the constant presence on his chest made itself known whenever his emotions were out of check was only making it worse. Bad looked like he wanted to argue, but Dream wasn't having it. He dropped the fragments of his old mask into Bad's lap, "Here. Since you can't stop feeling sad about it," and he jumped down to the ground and stalked off before he could say anything.

Why was he always so irritating?

~

Dream was carefully picking his way through a book, something that Bad decided Dream just had to read as something called *homework*, when Bad sat down on the couch next to him with a huff. While Dream hated the concept of homework, he had no doubt that whatever had Bad in a mood would be worse than reading some stupid book in English, so Dream continued to read.

Bad crossed his arms and squirmed a bit. Dream was having trouble focusing on the words with the older man's antsy presence taking up so much room in his mind and finally the masked boy slammed the book shut and glared at Bad. *"What could you possibly want?"*

*"I've been thinking, okay? About what you said about needing to learn how to feel things. I think the reason you're so cranky all the time is because you don't know any other emotions. So I'm just going to have to teach you then."*

Dream scoffed. Bad? Teach him emotions? He wasn't all that great of a teacher, if the progress Dream was making with English was any indication, and seeing how terribly Bad would do at teaching him emotions was not something he intended to experience. From the earnest expression on Bad's face, Dream had a sinking feeling that he had no choice in the matter.

"You're an idiot."

"Language!"

"Idiot isn't even a bad word!"

Bad clearly didn't care. "It's still a word that a ten year old shouldn't say!"

Dream groaned. Bad continued to be so completely insufferable. He stood, leaving the book he had been reading on the cushion, and wandered away. Dream wasn't in the mood to put up with his antics and just needed to get away, but Bad wasn't having it. The older man scrambled to his feet and started following Dream, hot on his heels.

"So what emotions do you already know how to feel?"

"*Annoyed.*" Dream replied, refusing to elaborate. He knew other emotions of course, but he wasn't going to admit that to Bad.

Bad frowned. "*Maybe the first thing I should teach you is gratefulness.*"

If Dream had a sense of humor, he would have laughed. "*I already know that. I'm just not grateful to people who meddle.*"

Of course, over the next two weeks, Bad made it his mission to meddle.

He is exactly as horrible at teaching him emotions as Dream thought he would be. Bad is constantly pestering Dream at every minute of the day with different questions and explanations and attempts at forcing Dream into some kind of emotional reaction.

Over dinner it's, "Being sad is like, overwhelming, you know?"

"No, I don't know."

When Bad ropes him into helping with the laundry he says, "When you're angry it just feels like you're going to burst."

And first thing in the morning, when Dream rolls off the couch, eyes still heavy with sleep, Bad will be there, his mouth already open to say another completely unhelpful thing. "You know, love is the best emotion there is."

Dream just wants to repeatedly bang his head against a wall. Bad's explanations are terrible and do absolutely nothing to help Dream learn anything about emotions. "*Can't relate.*" Dream replied coolly, not even bothering with English, and brushed past Bad to head towards the bathroom. It doesn't help that a lot of the emotions Bad tries to tell him about are ones that he is completely uninterested in learning.

"Dream! You can't keep avoiding emotions forever!"

After two weeks of this, Dream had just about had enough. He stomped into the kitchen where Bad was in the middle of making lunch. "Why?" He snaps, "Why are you trying so hard to teach

me this stuff?"

Bad looks completely baffled by Dream's question. "Why am I- Because I care about you muffin!"

"You do?" It honestly hadn't occurred to Dream that Bad actually cared. In hindsight, it made sense. Humans always got unnecessarily attached to things and it was no different for Bad.

"Do you really think I would let you live in my house for six months if I didn't care about you?" To be honest, Dream didn't think he ever did, and that was part of the problem.

"But you always yell at me."

"Because I don't want you doing stupid things you muffinhead!"

That sort of made sense, but Dream didn't see how tracking mud into the house could be stupid or dangerous. He tried to think of the words to explain that sentiment, but realized his English was still lacking. *"Okay fine, but emotions aren't going to stop me from doing stupid things."*

"I like feeling things, even bad things, because they make me feel alive. Is it really so bad that I want to share that with someone I care about?"

Honestly, Dream felt a little foolish. He looks away from Bad's intense and completely earnest gaze, unable to meet his eyes. Bad's honest explanation almost made Dream reconsider letting Bad continue to bother him with horrible explanations of emotions. *"You're terrible at it,"* He finally said, *"and I don't need your help in order to learn different emotions."*

"Why?"

*"Because I can do it myself and I want you to stop bothering me about it. Besides, you keep trying to teach me more than one at once."*

Bad looked confused. "Why would learning more than one be a bad thing?"

*"When I learn a new emotion, sometimes that's the only thing I can feel."*

"Is that really so terrible?" He asked

*"For weeks on end? Pass. After spending two whole months only being able to feel disgust about everything, I don't want a repeat."* Dream replied with a dismissive wave.

"Is it always like that?"

"No. *I think that's the one thing I have in common with humans.*"

"What?"

*"Some emotions are easier to control than others."*

"Fine," Bad eventually concedes, "I'll stop if you really want me to."

"Thank you."

Bad nodded and returned to cutting up vegetables for whatever he was making for lunch. Dream nodded as well, to himself, and left the room. He felt warm for some reason, and the more he thought about Bad caring about him, the more that feeling grew.

Several years down the line, Dream would learn that feeling was called love.

~

Things changed slightly after Dream turned eleven. He started venturing further and further from Bad's house during the day, until he almost made it into town every afternoon. Dream was still wary of going into the village, he didn't exactly trust his limited knowledge of human culture to help him blend in. Eventually, he met some kids around his age that lived in town and although they found Dream to be mysterious and fascinating, he didn't really want anything to do with them.

The thing about children is that they tended to be even more persistent than Bad.

They followed him everywhere, *constantly*, always asking him why he wore a mask and what his accent was, how he was so good at climbing trees, where he lived, did he have any siblings, it's the most exhausting thing Dream had ever dealt with. Eventually, Dream cracked under pressure.

"I live with Bad." He finally admits. It was the first thing he said to them other than go away, and from the looks on their faces, he could tell that he was never going to get them to leave him alone again.

"Who's Bad? I never heard of him." One of the kids, a boy that looks maybe a year older than Dream, asked.

"I don't know. He lives in the woods." For some reason that made them all look nervous.

"What?" He asked.

"My mom says the man who lives in the woods is dangerous. You shouldn't live with him." A girl said. She looked younger than Dream, but carried herself like she was older. Knowing humans, either could be true.

Dream was kind of annoyed that they would insult Bad like that, especially since Bad was the least dangerous person he knew. "That's-" He fumbled with his words, it was a shame that Bad hadn't taught him any swear words in English because he wanted to call them all *fucking stupid*. So he did.

All of their eyes widened when Dream spoke his native tongue, it made him squirm to be stared at like that.

"What did you say? What did you say?" The first boy asked. The girl also looked curious, as did the youngest boy who had to be at least two years younger than Dream, although he couldn't tell with the large green scarf he was bundled in. The last boy was doing his best to appear aloof and uncaring, but Dream could see right through him.

"I- What?"

"Come on! You speak another language! That's where your accent comes from, right? You should teach us!"

Dream decided at that moment he was going to eradicate his accent with extreme prejudice. "I don't- It's not- I don't know the English words for it." He finally settled on.

"English?" The last boy asked. Dream was certain he was the oldest, he was much taller than the rest of them and had this odd attitude that reminded him of a cat. Affectionate from afar and a mean streak a mile wide.

“That’s what your language is called.”

“Oh. I didn’t know that.” He replied. “What’s your language called?”

“I don’t know how to say it in English.” Dream lied.

They all seemed to accept that at face value and Dream wondered what that said about Bad that a bunch of curious kids were better at not asking questions he didn’t want to answer.

“We should be friends! Let’s play!” The youngest suddenly said.

Dream shrugged, it wasn’t like he had anything better to do. “Okay.”

“What’s your name anyways?” The girl asks.

“Dream.”

The oldest boy makes a face. “That’s a weird name.”

The girl ignores him. “I’m Finn!”

“Isn’t that a boy’s name?” Dream asked, eyebrows knitted in confusion.

“I *am* a boy.” Dream hadn’t been surprised by anything in a while, but that certainly shocked him more than anything in his life.

“But you look like a girl!”

Finn laughed and then gestured to his friends. He pointed to the excitable boy first. “That’s Vurb, don’t listen to him, he’s weird.” Then he pointed to the boy in the large green scarf, “That’s Mega, he doesn’t talk, but he’s always super mean if you annoy him.”

“I’m Spifey,” the aloof boy introduced himself, cutting Finn off before he could say anything else. Finn smiled, unbothered. He must be used to Spifey acting like that which made Dream feel slightly uneasy.

“We should go camping!” Vurb suggested suddenly.

“Camping?” Dream asked. “What’s that?”

They all looked surprised that Dream didn’t know what camping was. “You know, where you sleep outside and gather food yourself and sit around the campfire and tell stories.” Finn said, like that was supposed to clear up anything for Dream.

“Why would I sleep outside? I live with Bad.”

“Oh come on! It’ll be fun!”

Dream didn’t really have anything to lose. He figured, why not? It was a human thing and he was trying to learn how to be human anyways. “Okay.”

“What are we going to tell our parents?” Vurb asked.

“Let’s just all say we’re staying at Spifey’s and then Spifey can say he’s at your house.” Finn replied.

Dream was confused. “Why wouldn’t you just tell them you’re going camping?”

Spifey looked at Dream like he was crazy, “Are you kidding? They’d never let us go if they knew.”

“Bad would let me go.” Dream shrugged, “and he would worry if I didn’t show up to dinner anyways.”

“There’s no way that’s true!” Spifey insisted. “My mom says that there’s a crazy man living in the woods, that he kidnaps children that don’t listen to their parents! You shouldn’t trust him.” Dream looked at him with disbelief. The other kids stayed silent, but from the uneasy looks on their faces and the way they shifted from side to side, he could tell that they didn’t disagree.

He rolled his eyes. “Whatever, I’m gonna go tell him right now and prove that you’re wrong.”

All of their eyes widened and they scrambled after Dream as he began walking home with a purpose. He didn’t even know when he considered Bad’s house his *home*, but the way they kept saying mean things about Bad made him spitefully cling to the idea of the older man being his family. He’s the kindest person Dream has ever met and everyone that says otherwise could go fuck themselves.

Vurb kept tugging on Dream’s arm to get him to stop and the others kept pleading with him to reconsider. It was ridiculous! Bad would never hurt a fly. He wouldn’t even let Dream say the word stupid because he thought Dream was too young to call things stupid.

It wasn’t long until they reached the garden gate of Bad’s home, all the kids following him fell silent with the house in view. Dream opened the gate and walked inside, Mega followed close behind, but the rest of them lingered by the gate with nervous expressions which only made Dream even more frustrated.

The front door opened and Bad strolled out with his arms full of laundry that needed to be hung out to dry and singing a human song completely off key that Dream had often heard him humming. He figured it was Bad’s favorite song.

“Dream!” Bad called when he noticed the masked boy. “I didn’t think you would be back so early, is everything alright?” He glanced at Mega and eyed the group of Dream’s new friends that lingered at the garden gate.

“I made some friends.” Dream said, which made Bad beam.

“Oh good! I was worried when you kept trying to spend all your free time alone you Muffin.”

“They invited me to go camping tonight.”

Bad paused, looking thoughtful, “Okay, thanks for letting me know. Should I pack you and your friends something for dinner? It wouldn’t be hard to whip something up really quickly.”

“No thanks. They said that part of camping is finding your own food.”

He nodded. “Be careful, okay?”

“I will.” Dream responded and then led Mega back down the path and out the gate. His friends immediately swarmed him with worried expressions on their faces.

“Are you okay? What happened? He didn’t do anything to you did he?” They all asked at the

same time, overwhelming Dream. He batted away their hands and shot them a glare.

“Why wouldn’t I be okay? It’s just Bad. He asked if I wanted him to pack me something to eat and told me to be careful.” All three of them looked to Mega for confirmation and only relaxed when the mute nodded in confirmation.

“Okay then, let’s go camping.” Finn finally said as an obvious attempt to lighten the mood. Dream led the way back to town, taking them to a shortcut through a grove of dark oak trees that shortened the walk between Bad’s and the village by about ten minutes. After they agreed to meet back at a large oak tree that was apparently some kind of landmark, the masked boy waited at the edge of town while his friends went to lie to their parents about where they would be spending the night. He felt about as uncomfortable with the idea of being in town around so many humans that would only ask questions as his friends felt while he spoke to Bad.

Luckily, it didn’t take them long.

Finn came back first and stood under the tree without noticing Dream, who had climbed high up into the branches. Feeling just a little mischievous, Dream jumped down, landing directly in front of him.

“Boo!” He shouted.

Finn screamed and fell on his ass. Something bubbled up in Dream’s chest and burst out before he could properly figure out what it was. It was laughter. Dream, without meaning to, doubled over in wheezy laughter that had him gasping for air.

“Dream!” Finn screeched. “What the hell?”

He continued to laugh, only stopping to wonder why he hadn’t learned how to laugh before. It felt incredible. His laughter eventually died down.

“You’re such a fucking dipshit.” Finn complained.

“Fucking dipshit?” Dream repeated.

“Oh yeah, you don’t know English.” Finn mused. “They’re swearwords. I don’t actually know what they mean, but I heard my dad call someone that pissed him off a fucking dipshit once, so I just assumed.”

Dream was about to reply when Spifey and Mega walked up.

“Are you guys ready?” Spifey asked.

Finn nodded, “Yeah.”

“Then let’s go.”

“What about Vurb?” Dream asked.

“We don’t have to wait for him, the little weirdo can catch up.”

Dream didn’t really understand. Vurb was their friend, so why would they be so mean to him? The more time he spent with humans, the more confused he found himself. He wasn’t exactly sure if he should stick up for Vurb, but he kind of wanted to fit in more than he wanted to listen to the small voice in the back of his mind that sounded a little too much like Bad. So he shrugged and



followed Spifey when he breezed past them, heading deeper into the woods.

“Hey! Wait up!” It was Vurb, huffing and puffing as he sprinted towards them.

Spifey tsked. “Darn.”

“Nice of you to finally show up.” Finn grinned and Mega kicked the younger boy in the ankle. From the way Vurb laughed, Dream could only assume that violence was how Mega showed affection. He got the impression that they had been hoping Vurb would get there before they left. He didn’t understand why they wouldn’t stand up to Spifey, just going along with the older boy despite disagreeing with him.

“You know I live on the far side of town, of course it would take me the longest to get here.”

Finn, Spifey, and Vurb spent the entire walk into the woods joking and laughing with Mega occasionally joining in by elbowing and attempting to trip them. It was a lot of inside jokes and Dream found himself being quiet most of the way.

“So Dream, why the mask?” Dream, startled at suddenly being addressed, blinked owlshly at Spifey.

“I like wearing it.” He replied.

“Do you ever take it off?” Finn asked.

“No.”

“Come on, it’s got to be uncomfortable wearing it all the time.” Dream didn’t like where this conversation was going, especially as Spifey continued to needle him.

“I’m used to it.”

“Just take it off man.”

Dream frowned, “no thank you.”

“Come on, just do it.”

“I said no.” Dream replied to Spifey firmly. There must have been something in his tone of voice, because all four of them flinched.

“I think here is a good place to set up camp.” Vurb said nervously. “Do you guys think this is a good place to camp?”

Honestly, it seemed pretty subpar to Dream, but Finn was quick to agree. He had to admit that he was a little relieved.

They set up camp mostly in silence and before long night fell and the only source of light was a campfire Mega built in the center of their camp. Finn huddled close to the fire and it didn’t escape Dream’s notice that Spifey rolled his eyes when he saw it. Curious. Dream had a bad feeling about how Spifey was acting, a feeling that had Dream feeling queasy. That feeling was worry, but he didn’t exactly know that.

“Hey, there's something cool nearby that I want to show you guys.” Spifey said, finally breaking the silence.

Vurb looked grateful for the distraction. “What is it?”

“It’s a surprise.”

Finn glanced between Spifey and the woods just outside the light of the fire. “I don’t know, it’s getting pretty late and I’m kind of tired.”

Spifey rolled his eyes and grabbed Finn’s arm, pulling him to his feet. “Don’t be such a stick in the mud.”

“Yeah! I want to see what Spifey wants to show us!” Vurb was practically vibrating in excitement.

“Then it’s decided.” Spifey dragged Finn with him as they walked away from camp. Vurb and Mega were close behind while Dream followed from several paces back. He knew that humans couldn’t see in the dark as well as he could and after about ten minutes of walking, Dream got the impression that Spifey was lost. They were zig-zagging through the woods and constantly walking in circles. If Dream hadn’t been able to see so well, he would have lost his sense of direction long ago.

Spifey came to a stop and Dream narrowed his eyes when he saw the grin on his face. “Finn, you’re shaking! Don’t tell me, are you afraid of the dark?”

“Fuck off Spifey.” Finn growled and struggled to free himself from Spifey’s grip. Spifey was older and bigger and he was much stronger than Finn. “I am not scared.”

Spifey’s grin widened. “Well if you’re not scared, then you won’t mind staying here then, will you?”

“What?” Finn asked, alarmed. “No!”

“I don’t know, you sound kind of scared to me Finn.” Vurb said.

“Don’t you dare.” Finn hissed.

Spifey laughed and pushed Finn, sending him to the ground. “Run!” He shouted and sprinted off, Vurb and Mega only a few steps behind him. Finn struggled to his feet and ran after them, but he ended up tripping over an exposed root and went sprawling back to the ground.

By the time Finn stands up again, the others are long gone. Finn wrapped his arms around himself and Dream could swear he suddenly smelled salt

“Are you okay?” Dream asks, making Finn jump.”

“Holy shit, you scared me.” Finn’s shoulders relaxed slightly, but only slightly. He still looked like he was going to jump out of his skin at any second. “I didn’t expect you to stay behind.”

“Bad says that I shouldn’t leave people alone if they’re crying.”

Finn laughed. It sounded bitter. “Maybe Bad isn’t too terrible after all.”

“He never was.”

“How are you not scared?”

“Because I don’t want to be.”

Finn's expression was complicated and Dream didn't bother to try and decipher it. "I don't want to be scared though."

"Then don't be." Dream didn't think it was too complicated, but Finn was human, so of course his emotions were different from Dream's. Finn fell quiet, obviously thinking about what Dream said. "Come on, let's go back to camp." He reached over and gave Finn's shirt a light tug so he knew where Dream was in the dark. Finn remained silent the whole way back to the campsite.

They were the first ones back. Dream figured they would be, when Spifey and the rest ran off, they had gone in the wrong direction. They were probably completely lost in the woods without any light to guide them back.

"I'm going to go find them." Dream said. "Will you be okay on your own?"

Finn didn't answer, just sitting down by the fire. Dream took that as an affirmative and left Finn alone to go search for the rest of his friends. Although, he wasn't sure if he wanted to stay friends with them after this.

They were surprisingly easy to find with how loud they were being as they trampled through the woods. Spifey didn't even make a snarky comment when Dream led them back to the camp, obviously embarrassed about getting so lost.

The next morning, Dream was the first one awake, but it didn't take long for everyone else to get up. Vurb and Spifey were joking and playing like normal, but Finn was unusually silent the whole way back to town. They passed near his house and Dream was about to split off from the group to head home, but the queasy feeling came back when he thought about leaving Finn alone with his friends. He was going to push the mysterious emotion aside and leave anyways, but the voice in the back of his head, the one that sounded like Bad, reared its ugly head.

*You shouldn't ignore someone in need!*

Even if the real Bad would never have to find out if Dream just left, he couldn't stand to disappoint the man who had become his family over the past year, even if it was just an imaginary Bad. Dream sighed and followed the group all the way back to town, walking side by side with Finn until they reached the feminine boy's house. He didn't wave goodbye to Dream, but the masked boy didn't need or want thanks.

He went home without saying goodbye to the others, he didn't know an emotion to describe how he felt about what happened the night before, but Dream had a feeling that if he did, it would leave a sour taste in his mouth.

~

After the overnight camping, Finn was suddenly *everywhere*.

It started the very next morning when Finn showed up at his house with a wide grin settled on his face. Dream should have known at that moment that he was going to be a thorn in his side.

If Dream was out climbing trees in the woods, Finn would appear and try climbing after him. After getting stuck in the trees a few times and needing Dream's help down, he only watched from the ground, shouting encouragement. If Dream was walking anywhere, Finn would be right at his side, pestering Dream with questions. The masked boy learned quickly to not answer any of them or else Finn would only get more persistent. When Dream was out in the garden hanging up laundry for bad, Finn would sit on an overturned bucket and tell Dream all about his day. Finn

would come all the way to his house to show him cool rocks he found, to tell him any jokes he had thought of, to bring Bad extra baked goods from his family's bakery, to join him and Bad uninvited for lunch, basically every little excuse Finn could come up with would bring him to wherever Dream was.

It wasn't all that bad, Finn was actually kind of interesting when Dream bothered to listen to him. He learned that Finn was a stitcher, a mage that could mend broken inanimate objects, but he wasn't very good at it. Finn told him that he was born a boy and was definitely always going to be a boy, but he liked girl's clothing and chose to look like a girl because it made him feel good about himself.

Sometimes though, he would show up looking like a boy. The first time it happened, Dream almost didn't recognize him, and he probably wouldn't have if Finn didn't open his mouth to speak.

Finn must have eventually made up with his friends because after about a month, Dream was weeding Bad's garden and looked up to see Finn arriving with a sheepish Vurb not far behind. At least it wasn't Spifey. He would never admit it out loud, but Finn was his best friend and if Spifey showed up unannounced, Dream just might have to fight him for what he did to Finn.

Finn and Vurb stayed for lunch. It took a few hours for Vurb to stop being so jumpy around Bad, but one bite of his rabbit stew and suddenly Bad was Vurb's favorite person in the world. Dream understood the feeling, Bad's cooking was unparalleled and Dream blamed his skill for how quickly he became attached to the older man over a year ago.

A few weeks later, Mega joins them. He's still as silent as ever, but still as rude and violent as ever. Mega likes to pull pranks and that sets Dream on edge, but eventually the two of them come to an understanding, he would never go too far, not like Spifey had. His pranks were actually pretty fun, making Vurb believe that babies came from eggs, tricking Finn into a trap where he gets a bucket of water dumped on his head, and other things in a similar vein.

Dream, who had recently discovered his own mischievous streak about two months ago, often joined in. He had almost gotten Mega to laugh out loud when he convinced Finn and Vurb that in his culture, everyone walked backwards and that it was rude to walk forward. The two of them spent an hour practicing walking backwards before Dream could no longer hold his laughter in. They had been embarrassed at being fooled so easily, but they found it equally as hilarious as Dream and Mega after a few minutes of grumbling.

One day, Finn showed up alone.

"Spifey apologized to me." Dream looked up from the book he was reading. He was stunned out of his comfortable seat on the porch swing and his grip loosened as he focused on Finn instead of the homework Bad assigned him. His English was damn near perfect at this point and he no longer had an accent, but Bad still insisted that he practice.

A breeze blew across the porch and caused several pages to turn. Dream snapped the book closed, he could read it later. "And?"

"What do you mean and?"

"You wouldn't come all this way, by yourself, if you didn't have something to add."

Finn chewed on his lip indecisively. He didn't want to tell Dream whatever was on his mind, he could tell, but Dream would press until he spilled. "I think I'm going to forgive him."

Dream nodded. He wasn't happy about it, but he understood. "I figured you might."

"He suggested we go camping again." Dream stared at Finn, trying to get a read on him. It was a testament to Finn's nerves that he met Dream's gaze. "Will you come with?"

He mulled it over. On one hand, Dream didn't want to see Spifey, but on the other, he knew there was no way he could stop Finn from doing what he wanted. Letting Finn go alone seemed like a terrible idea.

"Sure. I'll go."

And so he went.

This time, instead of meeting them near town, Dream met up with them in the woods. He expected the trip to be stiff and awkward, but everyone, especially Spifey, was joking around like the last time they went camping hadn't gone terribly wrong.

Dream didn't like it.

He cornered Spifey away from the rest of the group. Dream needed to know if he was really sorry, if he wasn't going to go too far again. "You better not try anything Spifey."

"Why? Are you going to stop me?" Dream gritted his teeth. He was used to insufferable people. Bad and Finn were both as such, but Spifey was a whole new kind of irritating.

"You don't deserve to be their friend."

Spifey's eyes darkened. "Make no mistake Dream. They were my friends *first* and I know where their loyalties lie." The older boy sauntered off with a smug grin, leaving Dream to seethe all alone.

Dream spent the rest of the night watching Spifey for any sign that he was up to something, but eventually he grew tired and his eyes felt heavy. He fell asleep laying down between Finn and the campfire.

Dream was roused from sleep by urgent whispers.

"Come on! Just do it!"

"I-"

"Don't be a coward. He can't hide behind a mask forever."

He wasn't quite awake enough to understand what he was hearing, but he still instinctively felt like he needed to get up, to *move*. Dream barely managed to open his eyes when his mask was ripped from his face.

Vurb took one look at Dream and screamed. He, Spifey, and Mega all took off at a dead sprint, leaving just Dream sitting and Finn standing beside the dying campfire.

Finn looked horrified.

Dream's mask was clutched in Finn's hand and when Dream stood to take it back, Finn scrambled backwards, just out of reach. "Finn. Give it back. Please." He said and took a step forward. Finn stepped backwards, he looked desperate to keep space between them.

“You- You’re a *monster*” Finn whispered and Dream’s mask clattered to the ground.

“Finn wait!”

“No.” Finn’s voice broke and he turned and ran.

Dream felt something snap in his chest. It *hurt*. He was almost convinced it was that *thing* acting up again, but he was able to recognize the pain as an emotion. It was only because of Bad that Dream was able to identify the new emotion. Heartbreak.

From then on, Dream didn’t sleep.

~

Dream went home alone. It took Bad about five seconds to see that Dream was in a bad mood, but no matter how hard he prodded the masked boy for answers, Dream wouldn’t tell him why. He didn’t want to admit to the older man that his friends had called him a monster because of what was behind his mask. He didn’t want Bad to know. What if Bad found out and called him a monster too? Dream didn’t know if he could handle that.

Weeks went by with Dream avoiding all conversation like the plague. Bad let him be as long as he still helped around the house with chores. He must have figured that Dream and his friends just had a disagreement and that they would make up eventually. Dream didn’t think he would ever make up with his friends, even if they apologized, he wasn’t sure he would even want to forgive them.

After a while, Bad must have realized that the fight was worse than he originally thought because each day that passed without Dream’s friends coming to visit, Bad would send Dream more and more worried looks when he thought that the masked boy wasn’t looking. Dream didn’t have to look to notice.

“Are you and your friend’s fighting?” Bad asked during one of his attempts to get to the bottom of things.

“No.”

“I’m sure you guys will make up soon!”

“I said *no*, Bad.” Dream snapped.

That was a few days ago and Dream could tell that Bad was beginning to get fed up. It was infuriating that no matter how well Dream avoided Bad, the older man wouldn’t get angry. If he got angry, then at least it would be easy to ignore him, but as it was, Dream could hardly stand the distressed expressions Bad would make. They were at a stalemate, and nothing would change until one of them broke.

Dream broke first.

“They took my mask off.” He admitted quietly one night while the two of them were washing up after dinner. Dream had been scrubbing the same plate for almost five minutes while he worked up the courage to say anything. Bad must have suspected what was going through Dream’s head, because instead of admonishing him for taking so long, the older man just waited in perfect silence until Dream spoke. “They took it off while I was asleep and I-” He paused to take a shaky breath, “I don’t understand why they ran away. Shouldn’t I have been the one to run? I’m the one that wants to hide my face, not them. Is it my fault? I didn’t tell them I’m not human, so they didn’t

expect anything different, but I thought that I looked human. I mean, my face doesn't look that different from theirs, right?"

Bad made a strangled sound in the back of his throat. "Dream, *no*. You can't blame yourself for their reactions. You didn't do anything wrong."

"How can you say that? How can I feel like this if I didn't do anything to deserve it?"

Dream suddenly found himself wrapped in a bear hug. "I'm so so so sorry that you've had to deal with this. You don't deserve to feel guilty for something that wasn't your fault. You shouldn't have to be stuck with trying to learn to control such an awful new emotion just because your friend's turned out to be such muffinheads."

"Am I really a monster?" Dream whispered the question that's been plaguing him since that last night in the woods.

"*No*. You are not a monster Dream. You're just different." His words were enough comfort to let Dream relax into Bad's hug. After weeks of avoiding all contact, some familial affection was exactly what Dream needed.

Bad pulled away a few minutes later and gave Dream a soft smile. Dream still felt off kilter, but he just assumed it was from the prolonged physical contact. It just wasn't something he was used to. "Bad?"

"Yeah?"

"How am I different?" Bad's mouth tightened into a thin line. He seemed to be torn over the question, but he must have made a decision because he turned and led Dream over to the couch, the unwashed dishes were forgotten.

He didn't answer until they were both settled into the couch cushions. "What were you feeling when you realized you didn't have your mask on? Or when they could see your face?"

"I-" Dream took a moment to think about it, "I'm not sure."

"It's okay, take your time. Just think about it."

The problem was that there wasn't anything for Dream to name. He had felt numb until the moment he had been left alone with Finn's words ringing in his ears. "Nothing. I felt nothing."

"I thought as much." Bad replied.

"That doesn't make any sense."

"You didn't feel anything because of what your friend's were feeling."

Dream decided to humor Bad, figuring that would give him more answers than getting frustrated. "Which is?"

"What you were feeling." Dream would kill him if he could.

"But I just said that I didn't feel anything!"

Bad shook his head. "Yes, but your emotions were still there. You just weren't the one that was feeling them."

“You mean?”

“The reason your friends had such a visceral reaction to your face is because that was what your reaction should have been towards them for taking your mask off.” Dream was finally getting answers, but they made even less sense than the cryptic nonsense Bad had been saying earlier.

“But how?”

“It’s just something your people can do. You push your emotions onto others when they see your face. You could probably do it with your mask on if you really tried, I know others have.”

It seemed completely crazy, but for some reason, Dream believed every word and more. He had a feeling that Bad was holding something back, that he could push more than just his emotions onto other people. Dream was so caught up in that realization, he almost didn’t process everything Bad had said. “Others?” He asked.

The reaction was instantaneous. Dream could literally see Bad’s walls come up in front of him and the masked boy couldn’t help but get incredibly frustrated. “No! You don’t get to weasel things out of me and then clam up as soon as I have questions about you.” Dream snapped, startling the older man. “I know that you’re hiding something and I know that it has to do with how you can speak Ender and know so much about me and where I came from. I’m tired of being treated like a child that doesn’t deserve to know things, so *tell* me.”

“Oh you muffin.” Bad sighed. He sounded tired. “It’s not that I was hiding it from you specifically, it’s just something that I haven’t been ready to talk about.”

Dream had the decency to look a little guilty. With the paper thin control he had on his newly learned guilt, he even felt it too. “I’m sorry, you don’t have to-”

“No, it’s fine.” Bad interrupted, “I have to talk about it eventually. Might as well be now.” Dream waited silently as Bad paused to collect his thoughts. He didn’t even dare to breathe, afraid that if he drew attention to himself in any way, Bad would change his mind and leave.

“I was in love,” Bad began, “I was in love with someone from the End Cities, just like you are. He found himself in the Overworld by accident too, landed right outside my house in my garden covered in cuts and bruises. It was difficult at first because neither of us spoke each other’s language and communication was extremely slow, but eventually we were able to start picking up on different words and phrases.

“I learned that his name was Skeppy and that he had expected to die before landing in my garden. He was a menace. Loved to play pranks and annoy me, but he always liked to make me laugh too. I’m surprised it took me as long as it did to fall for him.

“The reason I was so upset about your explanation of how you feel emotions is because it confirmed what I always suspected of Skeppy. I loved him, but no matter how much he said it, he didn’t really love me back. He didn’t know how to.”

Dream was almost scared to ask, “What happened?”

“He left without saying goodbye.”

“Where did he go?”

Bad shrugged. “I think he went home.”



That was news to Dream. There was a way for him to get back to the End Cities? His mind was suddenly racing with the possibility of returning home. His friends and family were probably long gone, but he still desperately wanted to go back, to get away from the Overworld and its confusing customs and inhabitants. Most importantly, he wanted to go back because of the thing he could feel growing on his chest. Dream wasn't totally sure what it was, but he knew that it would kill him and he knew that he wouldn't be able to find a way to remove it in the Overworld. He *had* to go back. "How do I get back?" He asked.

"Oh no you don't you muffin! For all you know it could be incredibly dangerous to go back! I'm not letting you wander off into the Overworld to just search for a way back to a home that might not even be there anymore!"

If Dream knew how to miss his family and friends in the End Cities, he probably would have shouted right back. As it was, Dream didn't know how to miss anybody, so he just leveled an unimpressed glare at Bad until the older man was able to calm down a bit. "It doesn't matter what is and isn't there. It's still my home and if you know something about how to go there and don't tell me, then you're a terrible friend."

Bad laughed, but it was the most bitter sound Dream had even heard. "There you go again, only eleven years old and you already sound mature enough to rival most adults."

"Are you going to tell me or not?"

"I'll tell you, I'll tell you." Bad sighed, defeated. "I don't actually know much, but it's at least something to start with."

"Just tell me, how do I get back to the End Cities?" Dream was getting impatient.

"You have to go through something called an End Portal. I don't know how to find one, but Skeppy must have figured it out, I don't know why else he would suddenly pack up and leave."

"Do you know how he was looking? Maybe I'll find it too."

Bad looked hurt by Dream's words, which the masked boy didn't really understand. "Dream, please promise me you won't leave."

"What?" Dream didn't get it. The whole point of Bad telling him about the End Portal was because Dream was going to go find it. Why else would he ask the older man about it so insistently?

"Skeppy left almost six years ago and I haven't heard anything from him since then. For all I know, he could have died while trying to find that portal. I can't lose you like that too. You're my family Dream. The only family I have left." He looked somber, something Bad didn't do very often.

"But-"

"I don't even know if the portal is real." Bad interrupted before Dream could continue, "Skeppy was convinced it was, but Skeppy also believed some of the craziest things that couldn't possibly be true. What if it's not real and you die chasing after some fictional portal? What then?"

It was certainly possible that the portal wasn't real, that it was just some rumor that gave Skeppy some kind of hope, but it gave Dream hope too. If he stayed with Bad, he was going to die, Dream knew that much for certain, his tagalong that was firmly embedded into his chest would make sure of it.

He debated telling Bad about the thing that was attached to his chest, about how it was slowly killing him and that his only hope for a cure was most likely in the place where he got it, in the End. Then Bad would probably agree that searching for the End Portal was the best option, but Dream couldn't do it. He couldn't make himself tell Bad, someone he cared about like family, that he was dying.

Dream wondered if Skeppy faced a similar dilemma. If he had actually truly loved and cared for Bad, but had a secret that would hurt the older man more than leaving without saying goodbye ever would.

"Promise me you won't leave. Not yet Dream." Bad pleaded.

"I promise." Dream said, but his words were hollow.

~

In the middle of the night, Dream pushed open his bedroom window and scanned the ground below him. Nothing seemed out of place. He jumped, tucked, and rolled into his landing on the ground, softening the noise of his boots hitting the dirt.

All of his meager belongings were in a bag on his back. Dream walked around the side of the house, down the garden path, and out the garden gate. He only looked back once when he was latching the gate behind him. Bad sat stone faced, looking out the front window, staring directly at Dream. Neither of them moved, even as they locked eyes.

Dream turned his back on Bad's house and Bad inside and disappeared down the path into the pitch black night. He never even waved goodbye.

## Chapter End Notes

As always, I refuse to do any editing. I wrote a majority of this on multiple days between the hours of 2-5am so if anything doesn't make sense, just ask me in the comments. If there are any glaring mistakes that several people are confused about, I might go back and fix it, but otherwise, this is an as is type of deal.

# It's Still Love

## Chapter Summary

George has been staring at Sapnap's neck. This makes Sapnap nervous. As usual, Dream is oblivious.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

I'm baaaaaack~! It's been a while, so like, sorry about that, but whatever. Part of it is because the end of the semester is difficult af, part is from this chapter being stubborn and not coming together as well as I'd hoped, and part is because sometimes I'm just not in the mood to write rpf, ya know?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It took Sapnap an embarrassingly long time to notice the staring. In his defense, George had a habit of staring at him and Dream whenever he was trying to figure something out, but for some reason, it felt different than usual.

This would be an unremarkable observation, probably just George being picky about something or other that would no doubt lead to them arguing for three hours, except for the fact that Sapnap had a dark bruise directly on the spot where the older boy was staring. It wasn't just some bruise either, it was left by Dream while the two of them had been lost in a cave system underneath a mineshaft.

The three of them hadn't talked about what they wanted in their relationship, not really. Why would they? They spent almost all of their time together, so why would they need to discuss boundaries for moments where only two of them were together?

And then Sapnap and Dream got lost in those caves.

Either way, the longer George stared at the bruise on Sapnap's neck, the more nervous the pyromancer got. Was he angry? Upset? Did he feel left out because they acted without George being there? An overwhelming silence had hung over them since they left the caves, but Sapnap could tell that the peace was both temporary and incredibly fragile. He had to do *something* to make it up to George before it was shattered.

Naturally, he went to Dream for help, the masked man was just as responsible for this mess as Sapnap after all.

"I'm worried that George feels left out." Sapnap blurted out as soon as the two of them had a moment alone. It was George's turn to cook again so Dream and Sapnap had decided to go find somewhere they could wash what little laundry they had.

Dream's head snapped up from where he was busy scrubbing at a stain on one of George's shirts. "What? What do you mean? About what?"

Sapnap resisted the urge to sigh. Of course Dream was completely clueless about George's weird mood. Sometimes Dream had an incredible ability to discover exactly what made George tick and then use it against the older man, but other times he was just too damn oblivious.

"You know," he gestured to the bruise on his neck, "about this."

Dream opened his mouth, an 'oh' silently passing through his lips. Good. He was learning. "Do you think he's mad at us?"

Sapnap snorted. "If he was mad, he would have yelled at us by now." It was true. Anger was the only emotion George excelled at expressing. Dream nodded in response, but nodding wasn't the answer that Sapnap wanted. If George was really and truly upset, but choosing to suffer in silence, then the pyromancer couldn't help the guilt that weighed on him heavily.

"Then he's sad?"

Leave it to Dream to oversimplify human emotions. "I don't know. Maybe. Partially."

"Then we should do something to change that."

"I *know* that, I just don't know what."

Dream gestured vaguely to just about all of Sapnap, "Give him one then."

"That-" actually wasn't a terrible idea. Sapnap hummed as he thought it over. "Okay so we just make out with George then, problem solved." He always was a fan of simple solutions.

"Great." Dream went back to scrubbing the laundry as if there had never been a problem in the first place. Sapnap envied his ability to move on from things so easily, even with a plan in mind, he was still anxious about George.

The two of them finished up the laundry and headed back to camp, George had made mushroom stew and had warmed up some bread from their leftover rations. They ate mostly in silence, George stealing glances at Sapnap's neck through the entire meal, Sapnap had to resist the urge to duck his head the entire time. He began to seriously consider buying a scarf.

Dream put his bowl to the side suddenly. "George." George jumped at the sound of his own name.

"Y-yeah?"

They watched with wide eyes as Dream stalked across their camp, his mask still slightly pushed up from when he was eating, and climbed into the older man's lap. George instinctively grabbed onto his boyfriend's thighs to keep him from falling and his entire face flushed bright red in embarrassment. Sapnap couldn't decide if he wanted to hit Dream or himself. Of course the masked man would have no tact, he should have expected it.

Dream gently cupped both of George's cheeks with his hands and kissed the older man deeply. It was a little too late to try a gentle approach and if Sapnap was anything, it was not a coward, so he scrambled to his feet to join his boyfriends before his nerves got the better of him.

He sat behind George, wrapping his arms around the older man's waist and pressed a soft kiss on

the base of his neck. George let out a whine and Sapnap's eyes flew up to see Dream intensify their kissing. Not one to be outdone, Sapnap latched onto George's neck to leave a bruise to match the ones on his own neck. The older man scrabbled at Dream's arms, desperately searching for something to hold onto. In response, Dream slid forward in George's lap and ground their hips together.

Sapnap and Dream were thrown backwards into the ground as George shot to his feet.

"George?"

The older man was white as a sheet. "I-" He began and then he was gone, sprinting into the trees.

"What the hell?" Sapnap exclaimed. They were shell shocked, staring at the treeline where George disappeared, and left wondering where they went wrong. Dream and Sapnap turned to look at each other, and just like that, they were on their feet and after their boyfriend as fast as they could run.

Dream was faster, much faster, and soon the masked man was out of Sapnap's line of vision. He didn't fall too far behind because only a few seconds later, George let out a frustrated shout.

Sapnap emerged from the trees to see Dream holding down George. The masked man had obviously tackled their boyfriend to the ground, and judging by George's panicked screeches, he didn't appreciate it. In fact, George looked a little too panicked to Sapnap, worrying the pyromancer.

He rushed over and pushed Dream off of him. George scrambled backwards, looking ready to bolt again. "Oh no you don't." Sapnap snapped and grabbed George by the wrist before he could run.

George froze in place. The three of them were left panting harshly and looking between each other, George looking by far the most anxious.

"Why did you run?" Dream asked, breaking the silence.

Their boyfriend looked pointedly at the ground instead of answering.

Sapnap was completely and utterly lost. Did he miss something? This was even worse than when he thought George was feeling left out of their relationship. "We're not mad George, we're just trying to understand."

"I-" He began, but fell silent before he could finish the thought.

"C'mon George, this isn't the time to struggle with your feelings." Dream said and Sapnap winced at the harshness of his words.

George ripped his wrist from Sapnap's grip and glared at the masked man. There were tears beginning to form in his eyes and Sapnap's heart dropped. "Shut up Dream." Sapnap said before an argument could be started. Then they really would never get to the bottom of what was bothering George.

"What?" Dream asked angrily. "He's the one that ran away."

Sapnap ignored him, "Did we do something wrong?"

George's head whipped in Sapnap's direction. "What? No!"

“Okay then what happened? Why did you think you had to run away from us?”

“B-because! Just because.” He looked close to tears.

Dream shifted closer to his boyfriends. “That’s not good enough. Obviously something freaked you out and we don’t want to do it again.”

George covered his face with his hands and mumbled something. Dream froze in place and Sapnap felt jealousy for his inhuman hearing. “What?” He asked.

“It was too much!” George burst out.

Sapnap’s teeth clicked together audibly and the three of them fell back into a terse silence.

“I think this is a conversation we need to have back at camp.” Sapnap climbed to his feet. He offered his hand to George to help him stand, but the older man brushed it aside to stand up on his own. It stung to feel like he wasn’t trusted by his boyfriend, but he stepped back to give George some room and tugged on Dream’s sleeve so the masked man knew to do the same.

They walked in total silence. Sapnap wished it wasn’t so tense because all it did was give him time to think. Was George starting to be afraid of him again? Did he do something to make George afraid of him? Then why would he run from Dream as well? Maybe he wanted to break up. What scared Sapnap the most was the idea that George might hate them.

When they got back to camp, the three of them stood facing each other awkwardly. None of them knew where to begin. It was obvious that they had made their first real communication error in their relationship, but they didn’t know how to fix it. They were so used to just knowing what each other was thinking that they could hardly believe they were in this situation.

Putting it off wasn’t going to fix anything anytime soon. “How can we stop it from being too much?” Sapnap asked.

George jerked at the sound of Sapnap’s voice. He didn’t look like he had been prepared to be addressed. “It’s- I-” He frowned and stared intensely at his own feet. “I just- I didn’t, *it* didn’t, it didn’t feel good, well it did, I just, I didn’t want it and I didn’t know what, I mean, how-”

“Hey. It’s okay.” Sapnap gently interrupted him before he could begin spiraling. “You aren’t going to hurt us, we just need to know so it doesn’t happen again.”

George glanced between Sapnap and Dream nervously. Sapnap tried his best to look reassuring, Dream on the other hand just looked sort of constipated. If George wasn’t seconds away from having a meltdown, the pyromancer would have laughed.

“I don’t like it.” George finally settled on saying.

Dream tilted his head thoughtfully. “Don’t like what?”

“You know, just-” He gestured at Sapnap.

His heart plummeted. “Me?”

“No!” George rushed to reassure him. He then gestured to his own neck. “That.”

“Hickies?” Dream asked.

He nodded half-heartedly. “Sort off.”

“Sex?” Sapnap asked.

George turned bright red. “Y-yeah.” He stuttered.

“But you were staring at my neck all the time!”

“I was scared.” He admitted quietly. “I thought that maybe you guys expected me to want the same thing from me.”

“That-”

“That’s stupid.” Dream interrupted. “It’s stupid you think we would make you do anything that would make you uncomfortable.”

“But-”

Sapnap pulled George into a hug before he could respond. “You’re such an idiot. *I’m* such an idiot. I just assumed you were feeling left out because Dream and I had been alone, but I should have asked first.” George relaxed into the hug and returned it.

“I should have told you guys that I wasn’t comfortable instead of running away.” He admitted.

“Yeah. You should have.”

“Maybe we should talk about what you *are* comfortable with so this doesn’t happen again.” Dream said and joined the hug, wrapping his arms around both his boyfriends.

George nodded into Sapnap’s shoulder. “This. This is nice.”

~

“So kissing is okay then?” Dream asked.

George and Sapnap were curled together on the same bedroll in front of the fire with Sapnap mostly on top of the brunette, using him as a pillow. Dream was sitting at the end of the bedroll, carding his fingers through George’s hair.

“Yeah.”

Sapnap looked up at George and grinned before stealing a kiss now that he knew it was okay.

“I’m also okay if you guys want to, like, without me.”

“Have sex?” Sapnap teased.

“Yeah...”

Sapnap got the distinct impression that George wasn’t really okay with it. “Nah. I don’t want to do anything with one of my boyfriends that I can’t do with both of them.”

George looked down at Sapnap in shock. “Wait, really?”

“Don’t want you feeling left out Georgie.” He winked salaciously, making George turn beet red and Dream wheeze. “What about you Dream?”

“Hmm. I don’t really care as long as you two are happy.”

“Are you sure? I mean, I know that most people want more in a relationship. I don’t want you guys to feel like you can’t do anything beca-”

“George I will happily never have sex for the rest of my life if it means I can be with you and Dream.” Sapnap said, cutting George’s rambling short.

“And if I change my mind?”

“What do you mean?” Dream asked, puzzled.

George blushed. “If I decide I want to have sex?”

“Then we’ll have sex.” Sapnap shrugged. “And if we get halfway into it and you decide you don’t like it, then we won’t.”

“We’re dating *you* George. That means all of you and everything that dating you includes.” Dream leaned forward and pressed a kiss to George’s forehead.

Sapnap felt George relax under him. “I love you.” George whispered. It was just loud enough for Sapnap to hear, which meant Dream heard it clear as day.

“I love you too.” Dream replied.

Sapnap smiled into George’s chest, “Me too.”

## Chapter End Notes

I really did just say ace rights and I'd do it again >:) I hope ya'll liked this chapter more than I did because I struggled before just saying fuck it.



# Through Hellfire

## Chapter Summary

George takes Sapnap on a date in the city.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

This update took longer to post than I planned, but it also ended up being longer than I planned, so win/win, right?

Anyways, here's my take on the Manburg v. Pogtopia arc because I just love sbi angst too much not to include it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Let's go on a date." George's suggestion is so sudden that Sapnap falls off the log he had been stretched across comfortably for a nap in the late morning sun. His boyfriend didn't laugh, which Sapnap was grateful for as he climbed to his feet and brushed the dirt from his clothes.

Sapnap was surprised, he had never been on a date with *just* George. Normally it would be all three of them, but Dream was off doing whatever Dream did when he claimed he needed some time alone. Neither Sapnap or George knew why he needed time to himself, Sapnap suspected it had something to do with his nonhuman tendencies, but they never asked. He was always back before sundown anyways. The result is that Sapnap and George spend a lot of time alone, but they usually spent that time arguing, which is infinitely better than the awkward silence when they weren't. It's probably why Sapnap picks so many fights.

He didn't want to go on a date where they spend the whole time arguing, but Sapnap can't be the only one who thinks silence would be unbearable. "Are you sure?" he asked, sounding confused.

George nodded. "We can go into town and get lunch, I have an emerald and some gold leftover from when I bought supplies."

That didn't sound terrible, but Sapnap was still worried. "Okay, sure."

The walk into town was just as silent as he feared. He kept anxiously glancing at George, who ignored him in favor of looking straight ahead and holding Sapnap's hand in an iron grip. Sapnap just hoped that his hand wasn't too sweaty.

Manberg was an ugly city, or at least Sapnap could tell it was normally an ugly city. Right now, the city was being flooded with decorations. Sapnap spotted a shopkeeper pinning ribbons to the awning above his shop while his wife hung windchimes above the window and door. Whenever the wind blew, Sapnap was hit with the smell of salt from the sea and any ribbons that weren't

properly pinned in place would blow in towards the shop and get caught on the pins in the wife's hair. Above them were a string of glass bulb lights that strung across the road from streetlamp to streetlamp as far as Sapnap could see and they bobbed up and down as a man on a ladder near the closest lamp adjusted them. There were dozens more people that were doing the same with banners, balloons, ribbons, and pretty much any other festival decoration Sapnap could think of.

"Was it like this yesterday when you came to get supplies?" Sapnap asked, his eyes wide with amazement.

George shook his head, "No, I didn't even know there was going to be a festival."

"I wonder what it's for."

"Probably some local holiday." George shrugged.

Sapnap grinned at his boyfriend, "We could ask?" It wasn't really a question.

"What? Why? Sapnap!" George whined as Sapnap dragged him by the hand to the closest shop.

"Excuse me," Sapnap waved to get the attention of the shopkeeper, a blonde woman who was putting out fresh pastries in front of the bakery, "Do you know what all the decorations are for?"

The woman jumped, startled, and looked at the two of them with wide eyes. "Oh! You must be from out of town." Her eyes shifted from side to side and Sapnap was struck by just how *exhausted* she looked. "It's all for a festival to celebrate the one year anniversary of the formation of Manburg."

"One year?" George asked in disbelief. Sapnap glanced around, all the buildings in the city looked pretty new, but they definitely weren't only a year old.

"Yes, well, it used to be L'Manburg before Schlatt was elected president. He renamed the city and made a lot of other changes." She explained.

Whoever this Schlatt guy was, Sapnap didn't want to meet him, especially if he worked his citizens to exhaustion. The baker wasn't the only one who seemed worse for wear, several of the shopkeepers Sapnap could see all seemed to be barely standing.

"When's the festival?"

"Oh, it's tomorrow, will you both be attending?" Sapnap wished. A festival sounded like the perfect thing to break up the monotony of travelling, but he and Dream were both wanted criminals. Sapnap could easily come and go without any trouble, but Dream's mask was too recognizable for him to spend a lot of time in populated areas.

George shook his head, "No, we're leaving tonight."

"Well, I'm sorry that you will miss it." The baker surprised Sapnap by actually sounding genuine in her words. He looked up from where he had been perusing her baked goods to study her face beyond the exhaustion. She was pretty, if she didn't look so tired Sapnap was sure she would be almost blindingly beautiful, and the look in her eyes seemed so kind. Sapnap was generally a good judge of character thanks to his experience as a pickpocket and he could tell that this baker was someone he would trust with his life.

"Thank you for telling us about the festival." George said and quickly began to pull Sapnap down the street before the baker could answer.

Sapnap was surprised by the sudden departure. Up until the last few seconds, George seemed fine with talking to the baker. “What the heck George? I wanted to buy something from her.”

George shook his head. “I had a bad feeling.”

“Weird. She seemed so nice.” Sapnap replied and glanced over his shoulder back towards the bakery. There he could see a tall man in a beanie talking to the baker who looked torn between relaxing in his presence and looking distraught. *I wonder who that guy is*. Sapnap thought as he and George turned the corner.

The next street over must have been some sort of restaurant district because the only storefront that wasn't selling food was a small market on the corner. Everything smelled good, from freshly baked bread to roasting meat. The more Sapnap looked, the more types of food he saw being sold, and the hungrier he got. He turned to George to ask for his opinion on where they should eat, but stopped dead in his tracks.

George looked *green*.

It took several seconds for Sapnap's brain to catch up and realize why George looked nauseous. The meat. Sapnap and Dream had both become almost vegetarians because George couldn't stand the smell of roasting meat, especially red meat like beef and pork.

Sapnap pulled George down the closest alley by his arm in an attempt to quickly get him as far away from the restaurants as he could. They made several turns down different side streets and alleys until all Sapnap could smell was the sea.

“Are you okay?” He asked George, letting go of his arm.

George nodded. “Yes. I'm fine now.”

Sapnap nodded his head a few times and looked around. They needed to get out of the alleys and back to a main street, but he didn't want to take them back in the direction of the smell of roasted meat. “Let's find somewhere else to eat.” This time, he took George's hand and laced their fingers together.

The two of them turned the next corner, looking for a new way to the main road, and ran into someone, sending all three of them sprawling to the ground.

“What the fuck?” The stranger said and Sapnap looked up to find that he was the tall man in the beanie that he had seen talking to the baker. Beside him, George tensed, and Sapnap could tell that his boyfriend was getting another bad feeling.

“Uh, sorry, my bad.” Sapnap said and got to his feet. He was the first one standing and made a point to put himself between George and the stranger.

The stranger scoffed. “You should be sorry. You just plowed right into me.” He had a funny accent that reminded Sapnap of how George spoke, but way more posh than his boyfriend.

“Sapnap?” George sounded nervous and Sapnap glanced over at him. He looked scared. He looked scared and he was staring past the stranger that they had collided with which made Sapnap nervous.

He turned to see what his boyfriend was looking at and his heart dropped. “Oh.” Behind the stranger were several more people who were frozen in place, staring at them with wide eyes, and each carrying a substantial amount of explosives. “Well this is awkward. I think we're going to

leave now.” Sapnap slowly stepped backwards, prodding George along with him.

Their backs hit something behind them. “You’re not going anywhere.” The man in the beanie said as Sapnap turned to see what was stopping them. A very large piglin hybrid with long pink hair and an intimidating glare stood between them and their freedom.

“Oh.” Sapnap said again. “This is *really* awkward.” Then the world went dark.

~

Sapnap came to with a gasp. Immediately there were hands on his face and he pushed them away, throwing himself backwards in panic. “Sapnap! Sapnap it’s me!” It was George’s voice and George’s hands, Sapnap immediately relaxed into his touch.

“What- What happened?” Sapnap asked in a hushed tone. They were in a cramped stone room that reminded him of a cave, but the walls were too flat and too perfect to be anything but manmade. The room was large and lit mostly with torches bolted to the walls at irregular intervals, but there was a small table in the room with lanterns on it.

George shook his head. “That guy with the pink hair hit you over the head with the hilt of his sword. He was going to knock me out, but I talked them out of it.”

“You?” George wasn’t exactly known for any sort of charisma and Sapnap almost didn’t believe he could be persuasive enough to stop these guys from doing whatever they wanted.

“No thanks to you! Now we’re trapped here while they argue about how they’re going to kill us.”

“You’re joking.” He wasn’t joking.

Sapnap could hear their captors arguing, their voices echoed from the opposite end of the large room. He could barely make out the shape of their figures in a circle in the dim and flickering light. “I was waiting for you to wake up so we can get out of here.” George kept his voice to a low whisper. None of their captors were nearby, but if they were planning an escape, they should be extremely careful not to let them know. “Now come on and get these chains off me.”

He looked down at their hands and was surprised to find that, yes, they did have chains on their wrists. Sapnap didn’t know how he missed it before. “Okay.” Normally, Sapnap would just blast through the chains with his magic, but the threat of leftover gunpowder from all the TNT their captors had been carrying had him reaching for his lockpicks instead. It had been a long time since Sapnap had helped Dream escape from prison when they first met, and since then, Sapnap had learned how to pick locks. Dream claimed it was an essential skill and Sapnap appreciated his boyfriend’s insistence that he should learn with every new life or death situation he managed to get himself out of thanks to the skill.

Sapnap easily disposed of their restraints and both men silently got to their feet. “Where’s the exit?” He asked George.

“Behind them.” His boyfriend gestured to the far side of the room.

“Unfortunate.”

“Tell me about it.”

He surveyed the rest of the room to make sure that there really was no other way out. “I guess we’re just going to have to make a break for it.”

George scowled. He wasn't as good at quick or daring escapes as Sapnap and Dream and preferred to avoid them at all costs. They didn't really have another choice.

"It'll be easy." Sapnap reassured him. "We'll just sneak as close as possible and then I'll catch them off guard and distract them so you can get a head start. I'll be right behind you."

"You're an idiot."

"Have any better ideas?" He must not have because George remained silent.

Their plan fell through before they could even get off the ground. Sapnap took only one step closer and suddenly Pinkie's head whipped around in their direction. George swore under his breath. As the rest of their captors turned towards them.

"Great. Now they're trying to escape! I told you we needed to kill them. We could have just left them in the alley and made it look like a mugging." The tall man in the beanie griped.

Pinkie rolled his eyes. "Then they would have been right next to the TNT and your plan would be ruined."

"Yeah Wilbur, Technoblade's right! We shouldn't even be trying to blow up L'Manburg anyways, Schlatt is the only one who deserves it." The third one, a lanky blonde boy, said.

"No! They're all traitors!" The man in the beanie, Wilbur, shouted, making the blonde boy cower.

"But what about Niki?" Wilbur softened, "and Fundy?" That must have been the wrong thing to say because his face darkened.

"I don't need him- *them* . I don't need anybody! All I need is the TNT and *revenge* ." Sapnap wasn't entirely sure what was happening, but he could definitely tell that Wilbur was clinically insane. He wanted to blow up a whole city just to get revenge on one man and Sapnap couldn't understand why his companions would listen to someone who obviously had so little regard for the lives of innocent people.

George was still tense beside him, ready to run at their first opportunity, but Pinkie, Technoblade, was watching them like a hawk. They obviously needed a new plan, and fast. He glanced around for inspiration and his eyes fell on the pile of their remaining TNT. His mouth was open and speaking before his brain could catch up. "This TNT?"

Wilbur's eyes snapped over to him and his monologuing was cut short. "You think you can stop me?"

George had a white-knuckle grip on Sapnap's arm, silently urging his boyfriend to be quiet. Unfortunately, Sapnap didn't have a lot of sense and kept talking anyways. "I don't have to stop you. They're duds." Not only was Sapnap a pyromancer, but he was also a little bit of a pyromaniac and that came with some tricks picked up here and there. Namely, he knew a thing or two about explosives, and with one look at the TNT stacked along the wall, Sapnap could tell it was put together wrong. Even if the TNT exploded, it wouldn't do more than maybe a meter or two of damage.

Wilbur eyed him closely. "Oh? And you think you could do better?"

"Sure. Anybody that knows at least something about explosives could fix it." George's grip on his arm grew impossibly tighter.

“And you know something, right?” Wilbur’s tone was dangerous and Sapnap only realized his mistake too late.

“Um, not really. Not at all, no.” Sapnap stumbled over his denial.

Wilbur glanced over at his pink haired companion. “Techno.”

In the blink of an eye, George was ripped from Sapnap’s side and pulled against Technoblade’s chest with a sword pressed against his neck. “What’s your name?” Wilbur’s voice was sweet and it made Sapnap’s stomach turn. He opened his mouth to insult the man, but Wilbur cut him off. “Tell me your name or your boyfriend loses his head.” Technoblade’s muscles tensed and Sapnap knew the man would really kill George in a heartbeat.

“It’s Sapnap.” He ground out.

“Okay *Sapnap*, here’s the deal,” his grin widened maniacally, “you’re going to fix all of my TNT and place it around the city for me.”

“And if I don’t?”

Wilbur shrugged. “Well then I guess you’ll just have to leave without your boyfriend.”

Sapnap looked over at George anxiously. Even in the dim light, Sapnap could see his boyfriend’s eyes behind the dark lenses of his goggles. His eyes flicked over towards the door and Sapnap had to school his expression to keep from reacting. George must think they still have a chance of escaping. Even if he didn’t think it was a good idea when a sword was pressed to his neck by a very large piglin hybrid, there wasn’t a universe where Sapnap wouldn’t put his complete and total trust into George. “Okay.” He said, never breaking eye-contact with his boyfriend.

Wilbur laughed. “Excellent! Let’s start now.”

Sapnap hadn’t been talking to Wilbur.

George leaned into the blade at his throat and then slammed his head backwards into Technoblade’s nose, stunning the piglin hybrid. Then he was gone, sprinting out the exit so fast it took everyone by surprise, including Sapnap.

Nobody moved for several seconds. Technoblade turned towards the door to chase after George and Sapnap leaped over the table in order to get there first, lighting the table on fire as he went, damn the possibility of any stray gunpowder hanging around. He was the first one to the door and when he rounded the corner he was faced with a rickety set stairs heading upwards. He barely paused before taking the stairs three at a time.

Sapnap burst through the door at the top of the stairs and into a bakery. Behind the counter stood the woman Sapnap and George had spoken to earlier. He didn’t have enough time to get angry about her presence with the sound of heavy boots coming up behind him, so he sprinted out the front door of the shop and down the street.

He didn’t know where George had gone, but he trusted his boyfriend’s magic to work when it counted and knew they would no doubt find each other soon. Sapnap sprinted towards the main square where there were the most people around. Their captors seemed the terrorist type and he didn’t think someone as unhinged as Wilbur would be allowed to walk around in broad daylight, let alone storm a crowded square. The problem was what to do once he was there. Wilbur wasn’t going to just let them walk out of the city and there wasn’t exactly a crowd that extended all the way to the city gates. They were going to be vulnerable at some point and Sapnap didn’t know if

he and George could actually get away if it came down to a fight between the two of them and Technoblade. Sapnap had spent enough time around Dream to know what the ease and confidence of a well accomplished fighter felt like, and if he had to guess based on how he carried himself, Technoblade was at least as good as Dream. George and Sapnap had never won a duel against Dream, not even working together.

If it came down to it, Sapnap was going to make sure George made it out, even if he had to sacrifice himself.

“Sapnap!” George’s voice called above the noise of the crowd and he looked over to see his boyfriend waving. He weaved between people, moving towards the market stalls George was standing next to, glad that they had the same idea about hiding in a crowd. The smell of food from the stalls filled his nose and reminded Sapnap that he had been running around on an empty stomach.

“Thank the guardians, I really didn’t want to have to go looking for you.” Sapnap groaned.

George laughed. “You seem in pretty high spirits for having just been kidnapped.”

“That would be the adrenaline.” He replied, making George laugh even more. “I don’t think we can leave this crowd anytime soon, we might as well get something to eat, I’m starving.”

“Sure, why not?”

Sapnap looked around at the different stalls to see what was being sold nearby. There was another bakery, different than the one they had come from, which was probably their best bet, but the smell of barbeque from the stall next to them was making Sapnap’s mouth water. Maybe he could send George to the bakery and get something small to eat before he returned so his boyfriend wouldn’t have to smell the meat.

He paused and looked at George. George who looked perfectly fine, also perusing the possible food options.

His fist slammed into George’s face before he even had time to think about it. George’s head snapped back and he instinctively covered his face. When he lowered his hands to glare at Sapnap, the pyromancer saw Wilbur’s face where his boyfriend’s should have been. “Shapechanger.” He spat.

“Shit. What gave me away?” The insane man asked, his normally crisp pronunciation muddled by his quickly swelling face.

Sapnap didn’t answer, already sprinting in another direction. Wilbur being a shapechanger was astronomically bad. It meant that he couldn’t trust anyone, the terrorist could be anyone that walked by, as long as he had at least a drop of their blood, Wilbur could change himself to look like another person down to the last hair. With Wilbur being a danger in crowds and Technoblade no doubt ready to strike in deserted areas, Sapnap had no idea where to go. He needed to find George, fast.

He rounded a corner and directly into his boyfriend. “George!” He cried out, relieved. Except, he had been fooled before, and he wouldn’t be again. Sapnap grabbed his boyfriend by the shirt and held up a flaming fist, ready to strike. “What’s your favorite food?” He shouted, his eyes were burning with magic.

George looked terrified. “What the hell Sapnap?”

“Answer the question!”

“Mushroom stew!” He shouted, tears in his eyes. Sapnap sagged in relief and extinguished his flame, it really was him.

George punched Sapnap, fear still evident on his face, and he felt his stomach drop. He had forgotten that George was scared of pyromancers. “Fuck George, I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean it.” He pulled his boyfriend into his chest, holding the older man tight enough to provide comfort, but loose enough for him to pull away if he needed. “Wilbur is a shapechanger, he already fooled me once and I had to be sure it was you. I panicked and didn’t think of what would happen if it was actually you.”

He pulled away and Sapnap ignored the hurt in favor of making sure his boyfriend was alright. “How do I know you’re you then? This could be a trick.” His voice was shaking, nevermind the fact that Sapnap couldn’t be the shapechanger if he had already used pyromancy.

Sapnap took the reply for what it was, an olive branch in the only form George was able to extend at the moment without panicking, an argument. “I could kiss you. No one could have as good of moves as I do.” He waggled his eyebrows, even though his smile was strained.

“Ew.” George responded immediately and turned to discreetly wipe the tears from his eyes. It was a testament to how much effort George put into getting used to Sapnap’s pyromancy that he didn’t descend into a full blown panic. “I guess it is you then.”

“Yeah, no one else would want to kiss your stinky face.”

“You’re such an idiot.”

The two of them broke into laughter, the events of the day finally catching up to them. Sure, it was normal for Sapnap to get into trouble, but that was usually because he broke a law, whatever had happened here was decidedly not his fault and a little too insane for him to fully comprehend. He had a feeling George felt the same way given how they were both laughing over practically nothing.

George gasped and shoved Sapnap with his full strength, knocking him off his feet. Sapnap, confused, looked up just in time to see a sword swing down directly where he had been standing before.

Technoblade emerged from the shadows, a vicious glare on his face.

“Fuck.” Sapnap said.

They took off running, the piglin hybrid close behind. “Split up!” George shouted.

“No!” With Wilbur running around, all it took was a split second of hesitation to strike at someone that looked familiar for the shapechanger to take advantage of them. They needed to stay together. Sapnap grabbed George’s hand and pulled him around the next corner. “I have an idea!”

He led them into an alley with a ladder up to the roof, Sapnap had seen it earlier when they were wandering around looking at the festival decorations. Thanks to Dream, they were both fairly good at parkour and it was their best bet to lose their pursuer. Sapnap pushed George up the ladder first and scrambled after him just as Technoblade reached the entrance to the alley. Once they were both safely at the top, George pushed the ladder away from the wall, knocking it over. It wasn’t much, but Sapnap appreciated every extra second they could get.



It didn't even phase Techno. He just started climbing the drainpipe on the side of the building, reminding Sapnap of Dream. George swore and they began bounding across the rooftops to get away, but Technoblade was close behind.

"How are we even meant to get away?" George shouted. Sapnap didn't have a clue, only urged his boyfriend to run faster.

They reached the end of the roofline. Their only escape was an eight foot gap across an alley to another roof. Sapnap knew he could make the jump, but George couldn't. Sapnap noticed a pole and grabbed it, pushing it into George's hands. "Use this to vault across. I'll jump after you." Technoblade was wearing heavy armor, he wouldn't be able to make the jump himself. George looked nervous. "Don't worry. I'll be fine." George nodded and sprinted towards the edge of the roof, vaulting across the gap perfectly. Sapnap started his own approach, ready to jump.

Technoblade was faster. He breezed past Sapnap, clearing the gap easily and slamming into George, pinning him to the ground. "No!" Sapnap screamed and leaped across himself. He attempted to tackle Techno off of him, but the piglin hybrid was like a stone wall.

A knife was suddenly pointed at his throat and Sapnap stilled. "I think that's enough of this little game of cat and mouse, don't you?" It was Wilbur, who had somehow managed to find them, and taken advantage of Sapnap's distraction. Technoblade roughly pulled George to his feet and held his arms twisted behind his back at a painful angle, effectively keeping Sapnap in place out of fear for what would happen to his boyfriend if he made a wrong move. He had been around enough criminals to know that Technoblade could easily dislocate George's shoulder or even break his arm. "Now. Let's all take a nice walk back to Niki's bakery and no one has to get hurt." Wilbur's tone didn't leave any room for argument.

~

The bakery's basement wasn't any more pleasant the second time around, if anything, it seemed even more suffocating than before. This time there were more people than before. Wilbur, Technoblade, and the blonde kid were still there, but they were joined by the baker, who Sapnap assumed was Niki, and another talkative kid with brown hair and ram horns. The talkative kid and the blonde one were chatting away, but the brunette kept sending nervous glances over to Sapnap and George. Obviously the kid didn't think there were going to be hostages. Sapnap wondered if he fully understood what the plan for all the TNT would lead to, he couldn't be so short-sighted or naive as to not realize there would be a large number of casualties if Wilbur's plan worked.

"Alright. I'm going to ask again. Fix the TNT or your boyfriend dies." It was a bit of a stretch to call that asking and Sapnap ground his teeth together in aggravation. He was going to burn Wilbur to a crisp if he ever got the chance.

"Fine."

The TNT was placed on the table in front of him. There was significantly more than before, no doubt the TNT they had already placed recollected after finding out they were all duds. Sapnap didn't want to do this, it would make him a murderer, a line he had never crossed before, but Sapnap would cut off his own arm for George and Dream, what was an innocent life, or a few hundred, compared to theirs? He didn't want to think about how fucked up that was, so he focused on the TNT in front of him.

It was a messy fix, leaving a lot of gunpowder spilled on the table and floor, but it was still quite easy to do. Wilbur watched him closely, for what, Sapnap didn't know. It wasn't like he knew enough about TNT to realize if Sapnap was screwing him over or not. In less than an hour, Sapnap

had finished arming all of the explosives.

“There. Happy?”

Wilbur only turned to the goat hybrid in the corner. “Tubbo?” Sapnap was shocked, the two boys had been so quiet, he had forgotten about their presence entirely. The brown haired boy, Tubbo, must know something about explosives, because as soon as he nodded at Wilbur, the unhinged man flashed a cheshire grin at the pyromancer. “Good. I am incredibly happy.”

“Great. Then let him go.” Sapnap gestured towards his boyfriend.

“Not so fast. There’s something else I need you to do for me first.”

“What?”

“Why, you’re going to help us plant it of course! Someone with knowledge about explosives must know the best places to put it to cause the most damage.” Sapnap wanted to be sick. He wasn’t sure if he could do this, it was already bad enough that he made the weapon, but to use it too? He might not be able to stomach it.

Sure, his hands had killed people before, but that was always with Dream at the wheel and it was easy to separate himself from things the masked man did while possessing him. Dream wasn’t around to save him this time. Sapnap looked over at George. Seeing his boyfriend with eyes wide in fear steeled Sapnap’s nerves. He would do anything, even this, no matter how selfish, if it meant saving George.

“Fine.” Sapnap stood. “Let’s go.”

“Excellent!” Wilbur clapped. “Techno, you stay here with our guest. Tommy, Tubbo, you two help carry the TNT, we have revenge to take!” If Wilbur wasn’t so damn terrifying, Sapnap would ridicule him for his dramatic flair. As it was, he probably didn’t want to provoke the man that held his boyfriend’s life in his hands.

Between the four of them, they easily carried all of the TNT out of Niki’s basement. The sweet baker looked like she wanted to stop them, but she seemed to wilt under Wilbur’s scrutiny. It occurred to Sapnap then that Schlatt probably wasn’t the reason Niki looked so exhausted, at least, not entirely.

Finding places to put the TNT was a simple affair. Sapnap had been running around Manburg all day and had more than enough time to become familiar with the city. After about half the TNT was set, Wilbur stopped him.

“I want to put the rest underneath the podium.” He claimed. It was overkill in Sapnap’s opinion, but it meant that less of the city would be destroyed, so he wasn’t going to argue.

“Isn’t Tubbo going to be on the podium for his speech Wilbur?” The blonde boy, Tommy, asked nervously.

“I’m not going to blow it up while he’s giving his speech, obviously.”

The blonde looked like he wanted to say more, but wisely shut his mouth. He looked so beaten down by Wilbur’s insanity, Sapnap wondered what kind of boy he was before the older man lost his mind. There had to be a before, at least. Sapnap refused to believe any of these people would follow Wilbur if he had been this unhinged from the start. Something must have happened. He *had* to have had some qualities that made him a worthwhile leader, at least at some point.

“Then when are you going to blow it up? I would quite like to know when to leave.” The goat hybrid, Tubbo, Sapnap guessed, asked.

“Hmm. How about at the end of your speech? You can say a secret code word that signals me to push the button and then you can hightail it out of there.” Wilbur replied.

Tubbo smiled, guardians, the boy was just too charismatic in a way that was completely opposite of Wilbur’s insane dramatics. “Okay! How about, ‘let the festival begin’?”

“Perfect!” Nevermind the fact that there was no way Tubbo would be able to get clear of the blast radius in such a short time. For his innocence, Wilbur was leading him to ruin. For his ignorance, Sapnap was leading him to his death.

The four of them managed to sneak underneath the podium and Sapnap directed them on how to set the TNT. It would take them about an hour because of just how much there was to place, but Sapnap was determined to get back to George as soon, so he managed it in half that time.

“Alright. Tubbo, you head home before Schlatt gets too suspicious. Tommy, let’s take Sapnap back to where the Blade is babysitting his boyfriend.” Wilbur laughed and gave Sapnap a good natured shove like they were old friends. Sapnap had never been more disgusted in his life. The walk back was short, the main square even closer to Niki’s bakery than Sapnap thought. It didn’t matter. He rushed ahead of Wilbur towards the steps down in the basement, making the older man laugh.

He found Technoblade sitting down at the table, sharpening his sword. Sapnap wanted to yell at him about making sparks so near to a surface that was covered in gunpowder, but then he spotted George in the far corner of the room, who jumped to his feet the second his boyfriend had returned. George threw his arms around Sapnap and pressed his face into his chest. They were only allowed a second to embrace before Techno appeared and ripped George away again.

“I helped you with your plan, now let him go!” Sapnap snarled. He wasn’t sure who he was growling at, Techno, for threatening George, Wilbur for ordering him to do it, or Tommy, who chose to be complacent in the face of Wilbur’s insanity.

“Why Sapnap, no need to be so mean. I thought we were friends.” Wilbur was so full of shit.

“I said let. Him. Go.”

Wilbur only tutted and pulled a bow from his inventory. “I’m afraid I can’t do that. I can’t have you running off to inform the authorities of our plan, so you see, I’m going to have to silence you. *Permanently* .”

Sapnap could only watch in horror as George was pushed to his knees and Techno began swinging a sword in a large arc towards his neck. Nevermind the arrow Wilbur was pointing an arrow at his heart, he only had eyes for George.

George was about to die and Sapnap was going to be forced to watch.

He pulled his flame to his fingertips before he had a chance to fully think of the consequences and with a snap, the table in the center of the room exploded with such a large boom, it sent everyone flying off their feet. Sapnap slammed into the wall behind him, his head smacking painfully against the stone, making his vision swim. Distantly, he was aware of the building above collapsing into the basement, but he wasn’t fully conscious of it.

His mind was foggy and he couldn’t think straight. He must have a concussion, which Sapnap

knew was bad, because head injuries were bad, but he knew that for some reason, for him it was worse. He couldn't remember why.

The wood of the collapsed building began to go up in smoke and staring at the flames, Sapnap realized they were his. The fire only blazed brighter, quickly consuming everything in the room. Right, he can't control his magic very well while concussed, in fact, Sapnap didn't think he could control it at all right now. Fire is insatiable and it was only going to grow. Sapnap could barely breathe because of the smoke, which worried him. Pyromancers can't be burned by their own flame, but not even he can survive without air.

Hands grip his face and Sapnap's gaze is torn away from the fire to meet George's eyes. He knows his own eyes are blazing orange, but with the concussion, he can't make them stop. Fire licks at George's arms and Sapnap whines as he watches the skin blister. He doesn't understand. George is terrified of fire, terrified of pyromancers, terrified of *him*, but he isn't running.

"Because I love you." Sapnap must have spoken his thoughts aloud because George presses their foreheads together and laughs as he replies. "There is nothing in this world that scares me enough to leave you behind." It must be true because George stares unflinchingly into Sapnap's eyes. "*I would walk through hellfire for you.*"

Sapnap has only prayed three times before in his life. The first when his parents died, the second when he was looking for that blasted mirror, and right then as he was led from the flaming ruins of his own creation by the bravest man he ever met. *I love this man. I love him more than I love fire, love him more than the flame beneath my skin, more than the sun that placed magic into my veins, if you ever take him from me, I pray you have no regrets, because you won't have long to change it.*

The walk is a blur because the next thing Sapnap knew, they were stumbling outside just as the building completely collapsed to block the stairs. Sapnap and George stare at the burning embers for a long moment before turning away and limping towards the city's entrance. Out of the corner of his eye, Sapnap sees Techno covered in ash, cradling a sobbing Tommy in his arms while Niki tries to soothe and comfort him. Wilbur is nowhere in sight.

Serves him right.

They move as fast as they can, wanting to leave the city as soon as possible, but Sapnap knows they have to make at least one stop to warn someone about the TNT. Even if the plan to set it off failed, the TNT is still there, and still capable of going off at the slightest spark. It's a miracle that the blast from Niki's bakery didn't set it off and Sapnap wants it gone before their luck is tested any further.

They aren't lucky.

Just as they are passing through the main square, which is now abandoned of people, all of them having gone to investigate the fire at Niki's bakery, the two of them spot Wilbur. He's across the square from the podium, right where Sapnap rigged the detonator.

"Sapnap!" Wilbur greets with a maniacal grin. If Sapnap had thought Wilbur looked insane before, then now he looks downright deranged. "How kind of you to join me as I mourn the loss of my country! The great L'Manburg! My unfinished symphony, forever unfinished!"

"Get away from the button Wilbur!" Sapnap calls back. If it goes off, with how close they are to the podium, all three of them will probably die in the blast.

Wilbur scoffs. “Why would I do that? It would be very counterproductive to my plan to *reduce this city to rubble* .”

“You’ll die.”

That makes Wilbur pause, then grin. “You sly fox! You set up the explosives so I would die in the blast, didn’t you? Oh well! All the better if you ask me!” He goes to press the button and Sapnap has his arm up and ready to kill him before he can do it, but his flame is still burning at Niki’s bakery and he has nothing to stop Wilbur with.

“ *What are you doing Wil ?*” Sapnap doesn’t think he had ever seen Wilbur look as still as he did right then. Just to George and his right, a figure steps into the square, a short, blonde man in a striped green bucket hat, but the most noticeable thing about this stranger is the large, shimmering wings he has folded behind his back.

“Phil!” Wilbur greets with false cheer. “What are you doing here?”

“I came to see my fool sons after they stopped replying to my letters.” Phil replies in an even tone. “Imagine my surprise when I find one of them ready to destroy a whole city over a bruised ego.”

Even though Sapnap and George are both being ignored, they are rooted in place. Sapnap is pretty sure one wrong move on their part would have Wilbur blowing the place to smithereens, with or without his father’s presence.

“B- *Bruised ego* ? How dare you, you weren’t here! This was my city, my *right* !” Wilbur screamed. His thin veneer of charisma was shattered and all Sapnap could see was a broken man. Unfortunately that man currently held their lives within his hands. It wasn’t looking good.

“It’s still here Wil! Your city is still here. All you’ll be doing is destroying what you created.”

“ *It’s already destroyed.* ” His tone was icy. “I’m just making it so everyone can see what I see.”

“Don’t do this Wil.”

Wilbur laughed then, suddenly calmer than he had been all day. “You know Phil, *dad* , it’s really a shame you didn’t come visit sooner. Maybe then I wouldn’t have spent so much time thinking. And reading. And plotting. In one of those books I read something about a great betrayal where a king took power by betraying his fellow countrymen, do you know what he said when he did it?”

*King Eret* , Sapnap thinks. He had read that man's biography cover to cover countless times, Sapnap knew the story Wilbur was referring to by heart. *He’s talking about King Eret.*

“It was never meant to be.” With tears in his eyes and a smile on his face, Wilbur pushed the button before anyone could stop him.

The initial blast sends Wilbur rocketing through the air and into the side of a building. The second explosion, the podium itself goes off, and Sapnap realizes this is the end. He and George are going to die and leave Dream all alone on his journey. It hurts to realize that he’ll never get to know what Dream is looking for, that he’ll never get to see the masked man, never tell him he loves him again.

Sapnap’s vision of the podium is obscured by feathers as he and George are tackled to the ground. The blast shakes the earth, probably the whole overworld, but the two of them are protected from falling debris.

Phil had saved their lives. Maybe he realized his son was probably dead on impact and decided to save them instead, maybe he acted on instinct, or maybe he just wanted to stop his son from having one more sin on top of the many piled on his shoulders, Sapnap would never know because he wasn't brave enough to ask. Things settle and the wing is pulled away.

Manburg isn't recognizable under all the rubble. Sapnap just hopes there aren't too many people dead. "There. Look." George points in the direction of Niki's bakery and Sapnap is relieved to see that most of the buildings there were still standing. That's where most of the people had gone after the bakery was burnt down, which meant very few people got hurt.

"Oh *Wil* ." Phil's voice cracking is the only sound in the square as the winged man pulls the body of his eldest son from the rubble and cradles it like he was a small child. "You stupid *stupid* boy."

Sapnap held no love for Wilbur, but he still has the heart to grieve the son of the man who saved their lives. He knows that Wilbur wasn't always a monster, and whoever he was before his descent into madness, that deserved to be mourned.

It feels wrong to witness Phil's grief, so they don't stay much longer, silently limping to the gates of the city. Dimly, Sapnap can feel his flame return to him, the fire at Niki's bakery having finally been put out, but he feels too numb to care. They limp outside, having no trouble since all the guards have ran in to investigate the blast, and collapse on a patch of grass.

Both Sapnap and George are quiet for a very long time, just watching the sunset. They are both covered in ash and dust, George's arms are patchy and red from blisters and burns, Sapnap is pretty sure his ankle is broken, either from Niki's bakery collapsing on him or from the podium's explosion. Now that there isn't adrenaline coursing through his veins, he can feel the foggiess of his concussion returning, which is only amplified by the shock that dulls his senses.

"This is the worst date I've ever been on." Sapnap finally says.

George laughs. He laughs and he laughs and he laughs so hard he starts to cry. Maybe he was just crying. Sapnap couldn't tell.

## Chapter End Notes

Guess whaaaaat? I finally have a set number of chapters y'all. This thing is going to be a whopping 31 chapters and I couldn't be more excited to know this fic might actually end :D

# Sometimes Bitter Sometimes Sweet

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap and Dream miss the rush that comes with a good heist, George isn't impressed.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

Ayyyy, I'm back!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I'm *starving* ." Sapnap whined as he collapsed onto his bedroll. A heavy weight landed on his chest, knocking the air from his lungs. "Hey!" It was George's pack and it was deceptively small for how much it weighed.

"It has food in it idiot." George sighed without looking up from the map he was studying. Sapnap didn't know why his boyfriend needed to triple check the map, they were right outside of Nareth, a major city with roads that led all over the country. If anything, they couldn't get lost even if they tried.

Sapnap opened the bag and made a face at it's contents. "If I never have to eat trail rations again, it'll be too soon." It had been weeks since they had been able to buy supplies and even longer since they had the money to buy anything fresh. It didn't help that the area around Nareth had more poisonous plants than edible ones, they hadn't been willing to risk foraging after Dream accidentally ate a handful of berries that would have killed a normal man. He only suffered from a prolonged stomach ache while Sapnap and George suffered through two days of his complaining. "Just once, can we please just buy something that isn't dried out and hard as rocks?"

"We don't really have the money for that." Dream said from where he was lounging in the branches of a tree directly above Sapnap.

The pyromancer stuck his tongue out at him. "We could easily get money."

George's head whipped in Sapnap's direction. "No stealing."

"Oh come on. Why not?" He whined.

"*Because it's illegal* ." Dream said in a terrible British accent.

George glared. "Well it *is* . Just because we're not in a country where you two are wanted criminals, doesn't mean we should test our luck."

"Can't we just steal a little bit? Just once?" Sapnap wasn't above begging if it meant they could finally have some fresh food, maybe even some spices. A bar of soap wouldn't be a terrible idea

considering how bad the three of them probably smelled from months on the road. “I mean, we won’t get caught. We *are* professionals after all.”

“Were. You *were* professionals. Now you’re-”

“Now we’re what? Professional boyfriends?” Dream asked as he rolled off the tree branch he was sitting on and landed gracefully on his feet next to Sapnap. “Is that all we are to you?”

George made a face and turned back to the map in front of him. “Would that really be so bad?” He grumbled, barely loud enough for Sapnap to hear.

They all fell silent. Sapnap could feel the uncomfortable tension between the three of them and he knew that it was only a matter of time before this conversation devolved into an actual argument, Dream and George must have felt it too because they looked just as uncomfortable.

Sapnap decided to bite the bullet, avoiding an argument wasn’t going to stop it from happening, not when all three of them were too stubborn for their own good. “I miss pickpocketing.” He made sure to meet George’s eyes as he said it, making the older man scowl.

It was true. Stealing provided an adrenaline rush he couldn’t get anywhere else. Stealing was better than a good book, than finally beating Dream in a fight, better than finally letting loose and burning everything in sight; Sapnap *loved* stealing.

He also loved George.

“No.” George replied immediately. “Absolutely not Sapnap.”

“Come on George, you’re not our mom.” Dream said with a roll of his eyes.

“And? Stealing is still illegal. If we have to start avoiding towns because you guys are wanted criminals again then what? The only reason we’re able to travel so easily is because we’re so far away from the countries where you guys have been caught before.”

Sapnap wanted to laugh, it had been a while since George so blatantly underestimated his boyfriends. “So we won’t get caught. Dream and I are way better at sneaking around and fighting than we used to be.”

“That doesn’t make it okay!”

“Then what’s the problem? You knew we were criminals when you decided to come with us.” Dream replied hotly. “We need money, so obviously we’re going to steal it.”

“What happened to always picking me over stealing?”

A hot stab of irritation hit Sapnap. “So what? We have to choose between something we love doing and you? Are you really that selfish?”

George flushed angrily. “That’s not fair.”

“What’s not fair?” Dream asked. “It’s two versus one, Sapnap and I obviously win. We’re going back to stealing things.”

“I don’t-”

“You don’t want us to steal things? To be criminals? We already are George! But you keep acting like we have to stop doing things just because you don’t want us to.” Sapnap pointed an



accusing finger at George's face. He was tired of George getting to call the shots, he was tired of always letting someone else be in charge, he was especially tired of being told what to do. "If you weren't okay with being in a relationship with thieves, then maybe you shouldn't have started dating us!"

George batted Sapnap's finger out of his face. "Maybe you're right!" He screamed right back and Sapnap's heart shattered. His heart breaking in half felt so painful that he was sure the sound of it echoed through the forest around them.

"Oh." Dream whispered. The sound of their labored breathing was the only noise for miles.

Sapnap *hated* when their fights were serious. It made him feel like something was his fault, like he wasn't enough for his boyfriends. Even worse was when George and Dream said something terrible, something that couldn't be taken back with just an apology. Sapnap felt like it was his fault that he couldn't stop them from getting to this point, but at the same time he was just as mad and hurt as Dream.

How could George say something like that?

He was filled with warring emotions, rage, hurt, guilt, it was altogether too much for Sapnap to handle. Before George or Dream could say anything more, either an apology or something more hurtful, Sapnap ran. He needed to get out of there before he suffocated under the weight of their words.

Sapnap wasn't entirely sure of what he was doing or where he was going. He was only aware of two things, the pounding of his feet beneath him and that he wasn't followed.

He reached the closest town alone.

It took several minutes of trying to get his breathing under control enough to not draw attention to himself.

Sapnap felt cold. "What the fuck." He whispered to himself under his breath. It wasn't normal for Sapnap to feel cold, in fact he couldn't remember ever feeling cold in his life. He always had his flame present beneath his skin, but now all he could feel was an overwhelming emptiness. It was like his spark was missing and it left a weight on his chest that made it difficult to breathe.

With neither Dream or George around to guide him, Sapnap felt self-destructive. He wanted nothing more than to burn something to the ground or pull off a huge heist just to fill the hole in his chest. Sapnap wasn't used to feeling empty. No matter what was making him feel this way, Sapnap was almost positive that it was going to keep him from using his magic as long as he felt so cold inside.

"Hurry it up you useless cow! I don't have time to wait for your lazy ass to check every crate I'm bringing into the city!" A booming voice interrupted Sapnap's thoughts and his gaze was drawn to the commotion. A large man in the nicest silk coat Sapnap had ever seen towered over a guard as he berated her for simply doing her job.

"I'm sorry sir, but it is required that all imported goods have to be inspected before they can be brought into the city." The guard looked terrified, Sapnap was positive that she was even younger than he was, but to her credit, she was holding her ground against the intimidating merchant in front of her.

The merchant drew back a hand and struck the guard across her face. Sapnap was planting himself

between the guard and the merchant with a vicious snarl before he even realized he had moved. “Keep your hands to yourself *pig*.”

The words were barely out of his mouth before a fist came barreling towards his face. Obviously the merchant was not impressed with Sapnap’s insult. The guard grabbed Sapnap by the arm and ripped him out of the way before he even had a chance to dodge and took the punch to the face herself.

Sapnap blinked at the guard in surprise. “What the hell did you do that for?”

“Your face looked too delicate to take the hit.” she responded casually.

“What? I’m not delicate!”

The merchant roared, furious at both Sapnap and the guard, both at being insulted so casually and being so blatantly ignored. Sapnap and the guard both fell into defensive positions, and Sapnap couldn’t help but admire the guard’s form. She was obviously a very experienced fighter, it’s no wonder she was able to stand up to the intimidating merchant when her fellow guards were nowhere to be found.

It was over in seconds. The merchant went to throw another right hook and the guard expertly ducked under his arm, turned, and threw the merchant over her shoulder and directly into the ground. “You’ll stay there until I’m done with my inspection if you know what’s good for you.” She spoke with an entirely too cheerful voice for someone who probably had a broken nose.

“Damn.” Sapnap laughed, the guard’s graceful takedown reminded Sapnap of Dream, which left an uncomfortable feeling in his gut, but he was still both impressed and entertained by her skill.

“Where did you learn to do that?”

“My dad. He wasn’t good for much, but he was a pretty decent teacher at least.” She carefully began to inspect her nose, wincing when she put too much pressure into her touch.

“Broken?”

“I think so.”

Sapnap mulled his options over, either he could go into town, leaving the guard to her broken nose and shitty job, or he could stick around. Beating up an entitled nobleman was definitely a more preferable fight to the one he was running from. “Want help setting it?”

The guard gave him a once over. “Pass.”

“I promise I have fixed broken noses before. I’ve had mine broken several times and my nose is still perfectly fine.”

“No wonder it’s crooked.” Ouch. This guard obviously didn’t pull punches, both in and out of fights. Despite her biting words, she stepped closer and let Sapnap get a look at her face. It was a clean break from what he could tell and he had no problem setting it back into place.

Even with the sharp pain of him touching her broken nose, the guard barely twitched. “It should heal pretty straight. As long as you don’t touch it until it’s healed, you shouldn’t even be able to tell that it was ever broken.”

“Thank you.” The guard said and turned back to the cart full of the merchant’s wares to finish her job. She stepped over the merchant’s still prone form.

Sapnap blinked several times in succession, he hadn't expected to be swiftly ignored as soon as the confrontation was over. "What's your name?" He asked in an attempt to continue their conversation.

Nothing but silence. The guard continued to poke through the crates until she was satisfied that there was no contraband.

"What?" She asked when she noticed that Sapnap was still standing there.

Sapnap couldn't believe her gall. "I asked you for your name."

"Oh." She seemed surprised. "Sorry, I'm Hannah."

"Sapnap."

"Huh?"

"That's my name. Sapnap."

"I didn't ask for your name."

Now Sapnap really couldn't believe this girl. What was up with her? She seemed more scatterbrained than George when his magic was really acting up. Sapnap pushed all thoughts of George out of his head, he still wasn't ready to face what had happened earlier.

"It's polite to give your name when someone introduces themselves to you." He replied with a roll of his eyes. "Hey, what's your problem anyways? You're so weird."

"I don't have a problem." Hannah snapped.

"Right." Sapnap said with a raised eyebrow. "Can I go in the gate now or do I need to sign in or something?"

"Are you carrying any goods on you?"

"No."

Hannah made a dramatic gesture towards the city walls behind her. "Then you are free to enter."

"Cool." Sapnap said, but he still didn't move.

She sighed at him. "Did you want something? Or are you planning to bother me all day?"

"I-" He began. "Not really. No."

Hannah shooed Sapnap reluctantly away towards the city gate. If he wasn't going to find a distraction in the guard, then he was going to have to find something else to keep him from thinking about George and Dream. Luckily he had a plan.

Nothing cleared Sapnap's head quite like stealing did.

He bumped into the first person he came across and expertly slipped their coin purse from their pocket. The rush he felt was a poor substitute for the warmth of his flame, but it was better than nothing.

Within a half hour, Sapnap's pockets were stuffed full of coin purses, but as he got more used to

the adrenaline of thieving, the emptier he felt. He collapsed onto the nearest bench, no longer having the energy to avoid his own thoughts.

He missed Dream. He missed George. If only they hadn't fought earlier, if only they were in the city with him. Pickpocketing was fun, but without his boyfriends around, it felt empty, like he was just going through the motions.

Sapnap sighed. He needed to go back, but he was scared of what he would find. Dream and George fought all the time, but never over serious things. Without Sapnap there, he wasn't sure if they would do something irreparable to their relationship.

"Sapnap." The pyromancer's head whipped over in surprise. Dream was standing there with his hands shoved into the pockets of his pants. Sapnap wished desperately that his boyfriend would take off his mask, maybe his facial expressions would offer more clarity than the stiffness in his shoulders.

"Dream."

"Are-" The masked man began, but immediately snapped his mouth shut, mulling his words over.

Sapnap shook his head and laughed pitifully. "Are you sorry?" The pyromancer asked.

Dream tensed before letting out a slow breath. "I don't know." He gestured towards Sapnap's pockets, obviously meaning the coin purses in them. "Are you?"

Sapnap scoffed, the truth was, he didn't know either. "How's George?"

"Crying, I think." Dream bumped shoulders with Sapnap as he sat on the bench beside him. "Were we being unfair?" That was a loaded question. On one hand, Sapnap and Dream were thieves at heart, they had always been thieves and were probably going to be fighting their sticky fingers for a long time, if not for the rest of their lives. George knew this about them. He knew they were rather infamous thieves, especially around his hometown, but he chose to ignore that to travel with them. On the other hand, Sapnap loved George more than he loved stealing, and even though he missed the adrenaline rush that came with crime, it didn't feel the same when he knew that it was hurting his boyfriend.

"Probably."

Dream sighed. "Come on, let's return the things you stole and go apologize to our boyfriend."

They both climbed to their feet and Sapnap began pulling the coin purses out of his pockets and trying to remember who he had stolen each one from. He couldn't remember, and even more annoying, the people he had stolen from were obviously not hanging around where they were pickpocketed anymore. Tracking down every person to return their things was going to be impossible.

"Here, hand me one. I'll try and track them down by scent." Dream said, holding out a hand for a coin purse.

"What are you? A bloodhound?" Sapnap handed one over anyways and Dream immediately took off to try and find the owner. Until Dream returned, there wasn't much for Sapnap to do other than wander around, so he followed along with the flow of people until he ended up on a street that was mostly just shops one right after another. Sapnap still felt off kilter, and he would probably continue to do so until he made up with George, but the cacophony of bells, whistles, and intense haggling was familiar and helped settle his nerves a little. He knew it was an unusual reaction to a

crowded place, but Sapnap had a habit of finding things relaxing that only made others anxious.

One of the shops was noticeably empty and Sapnap stopped in his tracks when he noticed that it was a bookshop. He bit the inside of his cheek. Somehow Sapnap knew that he and Dream had an unspoken agreement to leave the city without any stolen goods, but rare books were always too good for Sapnap to pass up. Unfortunately, he didn't have the money to buy any either with the only gold on him being the stolen coin purses he'd been collecting all day. Still, he figured it wouldn't hurt to just look.

Sapnap entered the shop silently, giving a nod to the owner that eyed him as he came in. That must have been enough, because the owner went back to his business, paying Sapnap no mind. It would be trivially easy to swipe a stack of rare books from the shelves without being noticed, so easy that Sapnap was almost in physical pain as he restrained himself from taking any. Instead he just ran his fingers over the spines as he moved up and down the aisles with no apparent genre in mind. The shopkeeper glanced at him once, but otherwise ignored him.

He pulled a random book off the shelves to flip through the pages. It was a first edition, Sapnap could have cried. He put the book back and picked another, continuing to move through the shop, flipping through the pages of random books to pass the time while he waited for Dream to find him again. It was difficult, but Sapnap was pretty proud of himself for being able to hold back from taking any of the books and stuffing them into his coat.

There was only one book that he was even tempted to hold onto. It was more a journal than a book, but Sapnap wanted Dream's opinion on it, especially some of the strange markings that filled some of the pages.

Sapnap was in the bookshop for almost an hour when Dream found him. "Sapnap!" Dream called as he threw open the door to the shop. The shopkeeper sent them a nasty glare and the pyromancer found himself glancing over apologetically in response. "How many more of the co-" Sapnap smacked him in the arm before he could finish his sentence, they didn't need the guards called on them for accidentally admitting to being pickpockets in front of an angry bookshop owner. Luckily, Dream took the hint. "How many more do you have?"

He did a quick mental tally. "Fourteen."

"Shit. It took me almost an hour to find one person, we can't just track down fourteen people like that, we don't have the time!"

Sapnap sighed. "We just need a new plan then, one that doesn't involve chasing people down."

"Well do you have a plan then?"

"No."

"Then what are we supposed to do?"

They both fell silent and tried to think. It was a shame that they weren't as good at giving things to people as they were taking them.

Dream grabbed Sapnap's arm. "I have an idea!" he said excitedly and dragged his boyfriend out of the shop before Sapnap had a chance to react.

"Dream, wait! I didn't-"

"Everyone is probably looking for their missing coin purses, right?" Dream interrupted Sapnap

before he could speak. “I mean, in a city as safe as this one I bet they assumed they dropped it somewhere rather than having been robbed, so they would probably be looking for it. How much do you want to bet this city has a lost and found?”

Sapnap blinked, protests forgotten. “You know, that’s actually a good idea.”

“No need to sound so surprised.” Dream huffed and the two of them took off towards the city gates where there was a guard station. It was almost sunset and the gates were practically deserted with only one or two people trying to enter or leave and a few guards milling about. Dream and Sapnap walked directly up to the guard station which was manned by none other than Hannah.

“Sapnap.” She said bluntly, making Dream stop in his tracks to look over at his boyfriend.

“Hannah.” He replied in kind and then gestured to her face. “Nice bruise.”

She snorted. “Thanks. It matches my attitude.” She gave Dream a once over, “Who’s your friend?”

“My boyfriend.”

“Really? Figures. I should have known you’d be into weird shit like mysterious masked men.”

“What?” Dream wheezed.

“Oh, is he broken?”

“No, he just does that.” Sapnap replied, which only made Dream double over with even more wheezy laughter.

“Right.” Hannah said skeptically. “What can I help you with then?”

“We found some lost coin purses and want to turn them into the lost and found.” Sapnap replied and emptied his pockets of all the stolen goods, laying them out on the counter in front of them.

Hannah’s eyebrows raised into her hairline. “You found these, huh? All what, twenty of them?”

“Fourteen.”

“Right.” She said. “And you totally didn’t steal them in the first place?” Ouch. Sapnap hadn’t really thought about how suspicious it would be to try and turn so many coin purses into the lost and found, obviously that was a mistake. Luckily, he was a quick thinker.

“Why would I return fourteen coin purses full of coins if I had stolen them?”

Hannah narrowed her eyes at Sapnap. “Fine. You win, but only because you didn’t take the money from them.” Yeah, she totally saw right through him, but as long as Sapnap and Dream got to leave freely, then he didn’t give a damn about what Hannah thought of him.

“Okay great, thanks. See you never.” Sapnap grabbed Dream by the arm and dragged him out of the city before she could change her mind about letting them go, they needed to find George and didn’t have time for bureaucratic nonsense.

They reached the edge of the forest before Sapnap spoke again. “Where can we find him?” Dream immediately sobered up from his amusement over Hannah’s scathing remarks, perspective had a way of making things less funny after all.

“He’s still at our camp. Never left.” Sapnap nodded and trudged forward without another word. He was trying to formulate what he was going to say, especially because, George’s hurtful outburst aside, he wasn’t sure if either of them were right. Who should apologize? George? Sapnap? Both of them? Then who should apologize first? Sapnap didn’t know, the only thing he was sure of was how much he wanted their fight to be over. It had only been one day and he already missed George immensely.

Sapnap ran.

He ran towards the camp, towards George, towards half of his whole world. George had never been just his boyfriend, he knew from the moment they met that George was going to be his family, his *home*.

The trees parted and Sapnap came to a dead stop at the edge of their camp. George was sitting in the same place he had been that morning, only this time he was bent over, sitting with his head between his knees and his arms curled protectively around himself. “George?” Sapnap called softly, trying to get his attention. George didn’t move. “I’m sorry. You were right, I shouldn’t have said what I did, Dream shouldn’t have either, it wasn’t fair.”

George shifted, but he didn’t look up. Sapnap took that as permission to move closer and he took careful and slow steps towards his boyfriend, purposefully making noise as he went so George would know.

“I care more about you than I care about stealing things. You’re the most important thing in the world to me.”

“Even more than Dream?” George’s voice was muffled, but Sapnap heard him clearly.

The real answer to that question was no, George and Dream were equally important in his life, just in different ways. “Dream’s ego is so big I don’t have to find him nearly as important as you are. He does it all by himself.”

George laughed, it was soft and bittersweet, but he finally sat up and looked at Sapnap. “Where’s Dream?” He asked.

“I don’t know,” Sapnap shrugged, “I left him at the edge of the forest, but knowing him he’s probably hiding somewhere, eavesdropping, and waiting to see if we make up.”

“Yeah, probably.” George replied. They fell into silence, not sure what to say to each other, only able to fidget in place doing everything they could to avoid looking at each other. It was obvious that they were both still hurting, but mending the rift between them was not going to be an easy task. “I’m sorry.” George finally blurted out, making Sapnap turn to look at him with wide eyes. “I didn’t mean what I said either. I- I love both of you. A lot. I can’t imagine a world where I am not with the two of you and it was unfair of me to say something that was such a complete lie. I want you. I want you to be here for the rest of my life and I have never, ever, thought about leaving you.”

“Good.” Sapnap said and closed the gap between them. He grabbed George’s hands and pulled him to his feet so he could wrap his arms around his boyfriend in the tightest hug he could manage.

“I’m still mad at you though.”

Sapnap loosened his grip so he could look his boyfriend in the eyes. “What?”

“This is a conversation Dream needs to be a part of too, only this time, we need to listen to each

other instead of just trying to get our way.” George replied.

Sapnap couldn’t believe it. “When did you get so emotionally mature?”

“Well one of us has to do it, and you’ve been slacking today.” The truth stung, but Sapnap laughed anyway.

A twig snapped to his right and both Sapnap and George’s head whipped in that direction. Standing there was Dream. With his mask on, Sapnap couldn’t read his face, but based on Dream’s posture, he was pretty sure he was wearing a sheepish expression. Sapnap tilted his head to gesture Dream over to them, his hands were busy holding onto George’s waist and he wasn’t letting go anytime soon. Dream stumbled in his rush to get to his boyfriends’ side and expertly weaved himself into their embrace.

“Maybe we should lie down for this.” Sapnap suggested. If they were going to have a long serious talk then he at least wanted to be comfortable. Also, his feet hurt from walking around the city all day.

Somehow, the three of them managed to fit on a single bedroll, Sapnap and Dream side by side with George tucked comfortably into their chests. “Who wants to go first?” Sapnap asked.

“What?” Dream asked, confused.

“We need to talk about today, if we need to listen to each other then we should take turns talking.”

“Oh. Then I can go first I guess.” Dream replied. Both Sapnap and George turned to face him. “I miss stealing things. I’m upset that you would make us, make *me*, choose between you and that part of my life.” His words sounded rehearsed and it occurred to Sapnap that Dream had been thinking about what he was going to say since their argument. “I- That’s it. I don’t have anything else to say.”

George opened his mouth, then closed it, then opened it again. “I didn’t mean to make you feel like you had to choose.”

“Really? Because that’s exactly what it felt like.” Sapnap snorted in reply.

“Oh? Do you have something to say then?” George snapped.

Dream’s arm appeared before Sapnap could start yelling, wrapping around George and pressing a palm down heavily on Sapnap’s chest, forcing him to exhale. When Dream was sure that Sapnap was calm, he pulled his arm back and returned to his original position. Sapnap laughed softly, Dream was being awfully perceptive.

Sapnap sighed and tried again, this time in a much more calm manner. “It upsets me that you started dating us, knowing we were criminals, but then decided that we would change for you with no regard for our opinions on it. You make us better people George, but you don’t get to decide how we change and grow in our relationship.” George turned and pressed his face into Sapnap’s neck.

“Oh.” He said, his voice wobbling.

“Hey, it’s okay, we’re talking about this for a reason.” Sapnap whispered. George nodded, but didn’t pull away. “Okay, it’s your turn George.”

“I don’t want to.” He said, and burrowed in closer to Sapnap, trying to hide.



Dream reached over and tugged at George's shoulder until he could no longer hide his face in Sapnap's neck. "That's too bad."

"I feel selfish!" George cried. "It makes me uncomfortable knowing that you guys are off stealing things, but I know you like doing it, so I feel horrible about telling you to stop."

"What about it makes you uncomfortable?"

George made a face. "You come back having used someone else's money, someone else's things, to get what you want and you have no remorse about it. What if they needed that money desperately for something? What if what you stole had serious sentimental value? And then I get so worried that you'll get caught and you'll be sent off to prison and I won't be able to save you. I don't want to think about you as unfeeling. I don't want to be left alone."

Sapnap didn't know what to say, he never thought that George felt that way, he always just assumed that his objections to their thievery were about how they were breaking the law and nothing more. Instead the law had nothing to do with how George felt. "We didn't steal anything." Sapnap said suddenly.

"What?"

"Well, we did steal a few coin purses, but we returned all of them without taking the money."

"You did?"

It was Sapnap's turn to bury his face in George's shoulder. "It just wasn't any fun stealing things when I knew you were hurting because of it."

"Oh." George replied eloquently.

Dream scoffed, "Oh? That's all you have to say?"

"What else could I say?" George demanded, making Dream pause to think about it.

"I have no idea." Dream said after a moment's deliberation, making Sapnap burst into laughter. He was glad that the three of them were able to fall into an easy banter, it made the knot in Sapnap's chest loosen, giving him room to breathe. The words they exchanged earlier still hurt, and they would probably continue to hurt for a long time, but at least he knew their relationship would survive their fight.

They fell into an easy silence again and Sapnap seized the opportunity to curl even closer into his boyfriend's side. It was relaxing, but there was one other thing that was bothering Sapnap. "We can't try and settle fights like that anymore."

Both of his boyfriends swivelled their heads in his direction. "What do you mean?" George asked.

"Two against one." He replied and George exhaled slowly, hurt evident on his face, no doubt at the memory of Sapnap and Dream ignoring his concerns with majority rules. "It's unfair and we're only going to hurt each other if we keep doing it."

"I agree." Dream said. Sapnap glanced at him. He wished, not for the first time, that Dream didn't wear a mask, because not even his posture gave away his thoughts. Sapnap wasn't used to Dream being so emotionally mature and he was afraid that Dream was only going along with what his boyfriends wanted with no regard for his own feelings. He would have to ask the masked man later if he was being sincere.

In a rare display of affection, George rolled over to face Sapnap and wrapped his arms around him. "Thank you." His words were muffled from his face being buried in Sapnap's chest, but both him and Dream heard George just fine.

Then George inhaled sharply and reared back so he was sitting up. "You lied to me." He accused Sapnap with a finger pointed in the pyromancer's face.

"What do you mean?" Sapnap was confused, he had no idea what George was talking about. George grabbed at Sapnap's coat, digging into his pockets and pulling out a book. It took Sapnap a moment to recognize it. "Oh. *Oh*. Oh shit."

It was the book Sapnap had wanted to ask Dream's opinion on, but he never got the chance because the masked man had dragged him out of the bookshop. He had been so distracted that he forgot to put the book back on the shelves before they left.

"You said you didn't steal anything." George's expression was unreadable and that was how Sapnap knew he fucked up big time. Normally George was expressive when he was upset, anger usually clear on his face, but when he was like this, face like stone, Sapnap knew that it was the same as George being on the verge of tears.

"I didn't mean to! I was just looking at it when Dream dragged me out of the shop and I just forgot to put it down!"

"Don't give me that!" George snapped. "You're always stealing books. This is just like you!"

Sapnap wanted to scream, he was only trying to be helpful. "I just thought it was important!"

"Your dead mother isn't an excuse to steal every rare book you come across."

Dream gasped and Sapnap stared at George with wide eyes. A look of regret flashed across George's face, but he didn't look like he was planning to apologize.

Sapnap took a deep breath to steady himself before he attempted to speak again. "It looked like something Dream would be interested in, that's why I was looking at it. I wasn't thinking about stealing it. I swear."

"Why should I believe you?" George asked.

Sapnap gestured to the book half heartedly, "It's just some guy's journal, it's not valuable at all."

Dream reached over and snatched the book out of George's hands before either of them had a chance to react. "Hey!" George objected and tried to grab it back.

"I'm just looking." Dream said and jumped to his feet to avoid George's hands.

Sapnap took the chance to sit up and move closer to his boyfriend while he was distracted by Dream. "George I promise I'm not lying. I'll go return the book right now if I have to, I only took it by accident." He carefully grabbed George's hands and pulled them towards himself. Sapnap looked up at his boyfriend through his eyelashes as he began to gently kiss the tip of each of his fingers in apology. George turned bright red and pulled his hands away before Sapnap could finish.

"Okay. We return the book then."

"Uh, guys?" Dream interrupted, "This is what I've been looking for."

Both George and Sapnap's heads whipped in his direction. " *What?* " Wordlessly, Dream turned the journal so both of them could see what he was talking about. There, on the page, was a detailed sketch of a large ring. The sketch was titled: *End Portal* .

"What's an end portal?" Sapnap asked.

Dream nervously rubbed the back of his neck. "It's how I get home."

George and Sapnap stared at him silently. Dream's goals had always been nebulous at best to the two of them, and now, for the first time ever, they had a concrete goal. "I guess stealing would be okay, just this once." George finally said.

Sapnap blinked at him. "Or we could *buy* it."

Dream burst into laughter as George turned red with embarrassment.

## Chapter End Notes

I've been sitting on this chapter for such a long time. I've been so busy since Christmas that I've only been able to write about 500 words a week which is so frustrating. Oh well, can't do much about that. Hopefully this coherent because like always, I didn't edit this lmao.

ALSO @Eggmug1 on twitter made art of chapter 10!!!! Please go check it out I am in love!!!!!!

<https://twitter.com/Eggmug1/status/1354090310167478272?s=20>

# Soothe a Break, Splint a Burn

## Chapter Summary

After Manburg, George needs a break. They go fishing.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The midsummer heat was practically unbearable for George as he trudged slowly behind Dream, not even the canopies of nearby birch trees hanging overhead made a difference. It didn't help that George's skin was still pink, blistered, and warm like a sunburn from the fires of his and Sapnap's disastrous date. Sapnap, George noted bitterly, was completely fine. They had thought at first that Sapnap had fractured his ankle in the explosion, but it ended up being only a bad sprain and the younger man had been able to walk on it after a day or so of rest. With no injuries bothering Sapnap, George was guilt free as he found himself jealous of the pyromancer's immunity to the heat of his flames, especially when he himself was sore and aching.

From the anxious glances Sapnap had been sending him over the past few days, George figured he felt guilty for the burns that were visible on George's arms. George didn't know how to tell him that he would rather suffer some minor burns for a few days than be dead, so he kept his mouth shut and did his best to not complain about the discomfort they caused.

"Can we take a break?" George groaned and wiped sweat from his brow. He wanted nothing more than to just melt into the ground, anything to escape the heat.

Dream glanced over his shoulder at George and then came to a halt when he saw how much his boyfriend was sweating, although it seemed that Dream wasn't entirely unaffected by the heat either. It was a rare sight to see Dream without his signature green coat draped across his shoulders, instead it was stowed away in his pack. "That's probably a good idea. Maybe you should drink some water too." George must have looked even worse than he thought if Dream of all people was worried about his health.

"We're kind of out of water." Sapnap said as he bumped shoulders with George playfully as he stopped beside him. George had to resist the urge to wince at the feeling of Sapnap's sleeve brushing against his raw skin.

"What do you mean we're out of water?" Dream asked, alarmed. It was kind of funny, all things considered. The masked man didn't need water as often as humans did, so he had been pushing Sapnap and George onward without realizing they had been running low on the essentials.

Sapnap only shrugged, "It's like, the middle of a drought. Every stream we've passed has been dried up."

Dream frowned and cocked his head to the side. George knew that meant he was doing the thing where he "felt" things that were far away. He and Sapnap had tried to get Dream to explain how it

worked once, but to no avail. Even on the very rare occasions that Dream was in a sharing mood, his explanations hardly ever made sense to his boyfriends.

“There’s a lake nearby. Maybe half a mile that way.” Dream pointed directly to his left.

George didn’t even wait for Sapnap to respond, just started walking in the direction his boyfriend had pointed. “Oh my god can we *please* go swimming. I will do *anything* to cool off.”

“Anything, huh?” Sapnap grinned at George as he fell in step beside him. George’s face turned as red as the burns on his arms.

“Shut up Sapnap.”

They reached the lake in record time. George didn’t even bother to stop walking once he was on the shore, he just dropped his pack and kicked off his shoes without ever slowing down and waded out into the lake. Despite the heat of the day, the water was blissfully cool, and as soon as George was almost waist deep in the water, he collapsed, completely submerging himself. The water soothed his burns and left him feeling refreshed.

George exhaled and sunk to the bottom of the lake, filled with the urge to dig his fingers into the sand at the bottom while staring up at the sunlight that filtered through the lake’s crystal clear depths. He used the bottom of the lake to push himself into deeper water where it was even cooler until he was at least eight feet beneath the surface. He wished he could stay there forever, but eventually he had to swim up for air.

George gasped for air as he broke through the surface and turned to see where his boyfriends were. On the shore he could see Sapnap had gathered George’s pack and shoes from where they were discarded and already had a fire going to boil some water for drinking. Dream was nowhere to be found.

He only had a second to be concerned before a hand gripped him around the ankle and pulled him under. He flailed and kicked at his assailant, but Dream’s grip didn’t waver until he pulled George all the way down. Even underwater, George managed to level a glare at his boyfriend. Dream pushed his mask up slightly so George could see his cocky grin and took the brunette by the hand and pulled him in for a quick kiss.

Before Dream could pull away, George grabbed him by the shoulders to deepen the kiss, but Dream never got the chance to respond. George used his grip on Dream’s shoulders to push the masked man even deeper underwater and give himself the momentum to reach the surface with one swift kick.

A few seconds later, Dream surfaced beside him. “Why you little-” George splashed him in the face before he could finish, making his boyfriend splutter. There was exactly five seconds of calm where Dream’s mouth fell open with offense and George realized with a laugh that he had just started a fight he couldn’t win.

George took off, swimming as fast as he could towards the shore. Half a beat later, Dream followed.

He only managed to make it a few feet before Dream grabbed him by the ankle again and pulled him back. “Let me go!” He screeched.

Dream wheezed and his grip loosened on George’s leg for a second as he started laughing, but not enough for him to escape. “No! Why would I let you go when I could do this?” He grabbed

George by the shoulder and pushed him underwater. George flailed, not having a chance to take a proper breath before going under, and came back up coughing. Dream grabbed him by the arm and steadied him until he could catch his breath.

“You’re such an asshole.” He accused his boyfriend. His tone was lighthearted, but he still pushed Dream away.

“*You’re such an asshole*” Dream repeated, mocking. George laughed and the two of them swam back to shore where Sapnap was filling their waterskins with clean water. He was desperate for a drink, even if he would need to go for another swim to cool down after drinking hot water.

“Have fun?” Sapnap asked as they approached. George’s clothes stuck to him uncomfortably and were so heavy they made walking difficult, but he was still grateful for how cool they felt with the sun bearing down on him. His clothes wouldn’t stay wet for long in that heat.

“Yeah. Are you going to get in?” George replied with a half hearted gesture back towards the lake and took the waterskin Sapnap held out to him in response. He immediately took a large swig, almost scalding his tongue, but it was completely worth it to finally have something to drink.

He must have winced because both Sapnap and Dream laughed at him. “Nah, I’ll settle for just dipping my feet in. Pyromancers and water don’t mix well, but I saw a boat and a couple fishing rods a few yards that way if you guys want to try something other than drowning each other.”

Both George and Dream’s heads swivelled in the direction Sapnap pointed and sure enough, there was a small row boat pulled up on the shore. “How did we miss that?” Dream asked.

“I wish I knew.” George replied, but he did know. He had been too focused on cooling off to take in his surroundings.

“Wanna try and catch something?” Dream asked, miming reeling in a fish. George and Sapnap both burst into laughter.

“You look stupid.”

Dream rolled his eyes at George. “Oh come on.”

“You guys should totally go fishing. Grilled fish sounds way better than trail rations.” Fish was one of the few meats George could stand to be around while it was cooking, it didn’t remind him of the smell of burning flesh like pork or beef would.

“Sure. Catching some fish can’t be too hard.” George shrugged.

That’s how George found himself sitting across from Dream in a row boat in the middle of the lake with a fishing rod in his hands.

It was still unbearably hot and George was starting to regret agreeing to go fishing. “You know, for all this water around us, I feel very hot and dry.”

Dream snorted and casted a line before leaning back and relaxing. “It’s just some sun, it won’t hurt you. Besides, you have water now.” He gestured to the waterskin rolling around in the bottom of the boat.

George pouted. He was sweating again and it didn’t help that the waterskin was still warm to the touch from the water inside. Obviously he wasn’t going to get the chance to cool off again anytime soon, so he cast a line in the opposite direction as Dream and collapsed so he was lying in

the bottom of the boat. He barely paid attention to his line, only holding it in a loose grip with a majority of its weight leaning against the side of the boat. He trusted that Dream would be attentive enough for the both of them.

“You could be stuck on shore with Sapnap instead.” Dream replied, nudging George’s leg with his foot.

George lifted his head and peered over the side of the boat. In the distance he could barely see Sapnap with his pants rolled up wading into the water up to his knees. Even though Sapnap claimed that he didn’t like water because he was a pyromancer, that never stopped his boyfriend from bathing or running around in the rain. George had a sneaking suspicion that the reason he refused to get in was because Sapnap didn’t know how to swim.

He sighed and laid back down. The sun was still high in the sky and if George listened closely, he could hear the buzz of cicadas from the trees along the shore over the water that gently lapped at the edges of the boat. Dream could probably hear them perfectly, George mused. His senses were so sharp that George always wondered how his boyfriend didn’t get overwhelmed by all the information he just naturally absorbed.

George shifted his focus away from the sounds surrounding him and let all his awareness focus on a single point where he and Dream’s legs were touching. It was barely a touch, but George practically wanted to squirm at how it was both too much and not enough contact. Instead of doing anything, he just closed his eyes and lay there, taking deep and even breaths. He was positive that if it weren’t so hot with the sun bearing down on them that he would be able to drift off into sleep.

Without his permission, George’s eyes snapped open and he grabbed his fishing rod in a tight grip with both hands. His magic had given him just enough time to react because as soon as he grabbed the fishing rod, George was almost pulled out of the row boat by a large tug on his line. Dream dropped his fishing pole to grab George around the waist before he could be pulled overboard.

George screamed in frustration as he pulled on the line, trying to reel in the fish. He was grateful for Dream’s arm around his waist because it meant he didn’t have to focus on keeping his balance, but the fish was so strong and George was afraid that he would run out of strength before the fish did.

With his free hand, Dream reached around George to grab on the fishing rod as well and together they barely managed to reel it in.

The fish was *huge*.

George had to hold it with both hands and even then it was almost too heavy to hold comfortably. It was at least twice as long as Dream’s shoulders were wide and George couldn’t help but grin widely at his boyfriend. “I caught one!” He was practically giddy about it.

Dream snorted. “Why do you sound so surprised? Weren’t you raised in a coastal town?”

“That doesn’t mean I’ve ever been fishing.” George scoffed in response. He was actually quite proud of the fish he caught even though he didn’t do much more than take a nap. Maybe fishing wasn’t all that bad since it was a hobby that involved mostly just sitting around and doing nothing. George definitely saw the appeal. It also helped that it was the first time that George was better at something than Dream, which definitely boosted his ego. “You’re just jealous that I caught something before you did.”

Dream lightly kicked George’s shin, causing the boat to rock. “Don’t be such a dick.” George

shuffled his feet to keep his balance and rolled his eyes at his boyfriend.

“You literally tried to drown me earlier.”

“No I didn’t!”

“Yes you did! You tried to drown me and you’re bad at fishing.” Dream jolted forward to try and spook George, causing the older man to stumble backwards. He pivoted on his left foot to try and stay standing and barely managed to catch himself on the edge of the boat with one hand. His other hand was still gripping tightly on the fish, but not for long.

As soon as George was holding onto the fish with one hand, the fish thrashed violently, hitting George across the face with its tail. George, who had not been expecting the fish to still be alive after being out of the water for so long, jerked back and tripped over the edge of the boat into the water.

Dream cackled, his wheezing drowning out all other sounds as George resisted the temptation to just drown himself in embarrassment. “Shut up Dream.” He groaned and swam back to the row boat. Dream kept laughing anyway. “You’re such an asshole.” George accused as he tried to climb back in the boat, but he was stopped by Dream pushing him back in the water. “*Dream!*”

“What was that about me being bad at fishing?” He was wearing a shit eating grin.

George growled and attempted to climb into the boat again, only to be pushed away. “Oh my God, Dream!” He grabbed the edge of the boat and was pushed before he could even try to pull himself out of the water. “Fine! You’re not bad at fishing. Now let me get up!”

Dream laughed again. “I don’t know, you don’t sound like you mean it.”

This time when George grabbed the edge of the boat, instead of trying to pull himself up into the boat, he waited until Dream leaned forward to push him again and shifted his weight *down*. On a good quality row boat, George probably wouldn’t have been able to move the boat very much at all, but the row boat they found had been abandoned for a reason, it was poor quality and rocked far too much for a fishing boat. The edge of the boat dipped under the surface and almost immediately the boat was flooded with a foot of water and was steadily sinking deeper.

“*George!*” Dream screeched and fell in the water next to him as the boat capsized and disappeared beneath the lake’s surface. “I can’t believe you.”

“What? You should have let me in the boat then.”

Dream splashed George in the face. “You’re lucky that the only thing we had with us was a water skin.”

George spit out a mouthful of lake water. “I hate you.” He said and Dream laughed. George tried to splash him back, but Dream managed to dodge his attack. “Hey! Get back here!”

Dream splashed George again with a powerful kick and swam towards the shore. George took a moment to wipe the water from his eyes before swimming as fast as he could after his boyfriend. It was a pointless endeavor, Dream’s inhuman strength and reflexes meant he was a much stronger and faster swimmer than him, so George was surprised when he managed to catch up. Dream must have been going easy on him, which was unusual considering the masked man’s competitive nature, but George wasn’t kind enough to not take advantage of the opportunity his boyfriend presented.



George grabbed Dream by the ankle and yanked him back so he could grab a fistful of the blonde's shirt. Dream responded by grabbing him back, giving George only a moment to notice his boyfriend's grin and realize he had been tricked, and dragged them both under the surface of the water.

"You're such an asshole!" George tried to shout when Dream refused to let him go, but his words were muffled by the surrounding water. Even without being able to hear him, Dream must have understood what George was trying to say because his grin widened. He hugged George close to his chest and the two of them floated there, suspended within the middle of the lake. His ear was pressed against Dream's chest, and even with water muffling every sound, George could have sworn he could hear the steady and slow rhythm of Dream's heart. He closed his eyes and listened for as long as he could manage.

Eventually George needed to breathe, so he tapped Dream on the shoulder until his boyfriend loosened his grip and let him swim to the surface.

He gasped for air as he surfaced after being underwater for longer than he would have normally been comfortable with, but something about how refreshing and clear the water was had George relaxed all the way to the bone. It made him feel normal again, made him forget his irritated skin and how close he had been to death to get those burns. A chance to unwind was exactly what he needed after everything that happened in Manburg.

Judging by how Dream was also acting more affectionate than usual, the masked man needed it as well.

George and Sappnap had been shell shocked and completely emotionally drained by the time Dream had found them on the grassy hill outside of Manburg covered in dust and ashes, but George's heart still split in two when he saw Dream's usual cocky composure crack in the face of his boyfriends' distress. None of them knew how to handle what had happened. George refused to talk about it, at least out loud, he only wanted to seek comfort from Sappnap and Dream until the memories of what happened faded away. Sappnap was the opposite, choosing to be withdrawn whenever the anxieties began to build up around him. George didn't think Sappnap's way of dealing with the trauma was healthy, but he was content with letting the pyromancer deal with it on his own unless it became evident that it wasn't working.

Dream gently floated towards George until their faces were only inches away from each other. "Feel better yet?"

George wanted to laugh. Every time he was sure that Dream wouldn't be able to understand what he was going through, his boyfriend surprised him by showing a level of insight that George would never expect from someone who struggled to understand emotions on a basic level. "Yeah, a little bit." He replied. Dream gently headbutted George, light enough that he hardly felt it, and then began slowly swimming back towards shore which allowed George to easily keep up with him.

He felt lighter than he had in months and was glad for it.

When they reached shore, Sappnap was standing ankle deep in the water wearing an easy grin. His shoulders were relaxed and George was glad that the pyromancer seemed to have worked through the trauma during his time alone while he and Dream were out fishing. "Catch anything?" He asked. George flipped him off, making Sappnap laugh. "You guys both look like drowned rats."

George rolled his eyes "I wonder why."

"How did you manage to sink the boat anyway?"

“It was his fault!” George said.

At the same time Dream said, “He did it!” and the two of them pointed at one another. They blinked at each other before doubling over with laughter alongside Sapnap.

#### Chapter End Notes

I've had so much time to write this week, it's very nice. I've even started on chapter 18 already, but idk when I will finish it because with the way that chapter is going, I'm either almost done, or maybe only a quarter of the way through with no in between.

# When the Storm Rages

## Chapter Summary

Dream, Sapnap, and George get lost in a storm and have to seek shelter with some familiar faces.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dream was fine. He *was* , but Sapnap wasn't fine and George was looking even worse and all the masked man could do was worry.

They were caught in a blizzard, and while Dream could easily survive below freezing temperatures, it was cold enough that even Sapnap, who could use his magic to keep himself warm, was shivering in the face of the storm. George didn't have the luxury of fire magic or Dream's inhuman constitution and from the way that the older man was silent, walking with a single-minded purpose with both Dream and Sapnap's coats wrapped around him, told Dream that his boyfriend wasn't going to be able to last much longer. They needed to find shelter, *fast* , before George succumbed to hypothermia.

He had never been caught in a snowstorm before and all the stories in the world about how dangerous they could be did not prepare him for just how loud it was. Even with his heightened senses, Dream couldn't hear the crunch of his own footsteps in the snow over the wind's howling.

So maybe he wasn't actually fine, with the worry and the increasing likeness that he's going to have to figure out how to carry both of his boyfriends if they stay out in the storm, but they were in the middle of nowhere. According to the map, there weren't any towns for miles and the anxiety clawing at Dream over the realization that Sapnap and George could actually *die* in this storm was practically unbearable. They needed a miracle.

Dream had been leading the way before the storm hit, casually throwing ender eyes every few miles and occasionally correcting course whenever the eyes changed direction. Now Dream held the eyes in a tight grip, not even bothering to throw them, they couldn't afford to lose any in the snow. Now Dream walked behind his boyfriends being the only one capable of making sure neither of them fell behind.

Then, in the distance, Dream spotted a cluster of small lights that he could barely make out through the flurry of snow. He couldn't tell what the lights were, but the promise of shelter was enough to make him quicken his pace and grab his boyfriends by the arms. He needed to get them out of the cold as fast as possible or else their health could take a turn for the worst.

The lights turned out to be some sort of cottage that was several stories tall and if there had been no lights on, Dream was certain he could have walked within ten feet of its white exterior without ever having noticed it. Without hesitation, Dream dragged his boyfriends up the front steps and banged on the door. Nobody answered. He banged on the door again, louder this time, causing the whole thing to shake against the frame. Dream was getting ready to just break through the door if only to get George and Sapnap out of the cold when it finally opened.

A large piglin hybrid with a long braid of pink hair yanked open the door and glared down at Dream, he met the piglin's gaze unflinchingly, if he had to use force to get the stranger to let them inside, then so be it. The piglin's gaze turned towards George who was no longer shivering, but his lips were clearly blue in the light streaming through the doorway from behind the stranger.

Sapnap and George both stiffened beside him at the same time that the piglin froze, his expression turning into one of shock. They recognized each other, Dream realized in the back of his mind, but that came second to getting his boyfriends out of the cold. "Let us in." It was a demand, not a request.

Nobody moved for several long seconds. Finally, the piglin nodded towards Sapnap, "He gonna burn down my house?" Something about how the stranger carried himself told Dream he was an experienced fighter, one strong enough to give him trouble if it came down to a fight, maybe even someone he would lose to, but the masked man would never let something as trivial as skill stop him.

"If you give him a reason to, I'll kill you before he gets the chance." It was a promise. Dream wasn't sure how the three of them knew each other, but he was smart enough to realize that the stranger made his boyfriends uneasy. Still, if it was a choice between making them uncomfortable for a few hours until the storm blew over and dying of hypothermia, Dream would make them uncomfortable as he had to if it meant they survived.

The stranger didn't reply, only pulled the door open wider and stepped aside to let them in, obviously having accepted Dream's answer. Either he had severely underestimated how well Dream could fight in close quarters, even while protecting two other people, or he respected Dream's determination. Dream hoped it was the latter, respect would hopefully get him and his boyfriends through the night without being bothered by the stranger.

That hope was shattered the instant the three of them passed through the entryway. "What the fuck! It's you two!" a tall blonde boy screeched and pointed at them accusingly. Sapnap and George, who were both still barely keeping conscious, froze in place.

"Tommy!" An older man wearing a striped bucket hat snapped at the boy. "Manners." The man was short, even shorter than George, but he had a large yet comforting presence that seemed to fill the whole room. On his back was a mangled pile of bandages and upon closer inspection, Dream realized that they were actually wings that were carefully wrapped and splinted. They must have been broken.

Tommy rolled his eyes, but apologized. "Sorry Phil." He grumbled.

"I'm not the one you need to apologize to." The older man, Phil, pointed out. Tommy groaned.

"Why do I have to apologize to them! They tried to set us on fire! They killed Wilbur!" Phil's gaze snapped towards Sapnap and George. Recognition flashed through his eyes and the room fell so silent that a deaf man could hear a pin drop. Dream was left wondering when something like that could have possibly happened and his thoughts turned to the only thing both George and Sapnap refused to talk about, their date in Manburg. It had been weeks, but Dream still hadn't managed to pry a single word out of either of them about the matter. He knew that meant they needed time and distance in order to be able to talk about it, but judging by the horrified looks on their faces, they were going to be forced to confront whatever happened much sooner than they were ready.

Phil cleared his throat, breaking the silence. "You know that isn't how it happened." He whispered.

Tommy looked ready to argue, but then the piglin hybrid shuffled past them into the room and interrupted the conversation. “Get them next to the fire, they need to warm up more or the hypothermia might still kill them.” He gestured towards the fireplace.

Dream, grateful for the interruption, guided his boyfriends over to the fire. Even though he was dying to know what happened in Manburg, he felt guilty that he was learning it from someone that wasn't George and Sapnap. It was their trauma and their story to share, it felt wrong hearing it from someone else.

The piglin disappeared from the room and quickly returned with three sets of clothes and a pile of blankets. “Get them out of their wet clothes.” He said and handed everything to Dream.

Dream started to unbutton George's outermost layer, but the older man slapped his hands away and started lethargically removing the clothing himself, making the masked man blink. He knew what it meant when George didn't want to be touched, but he was surprised, it had been a long time since George had been distressed enough to want to avoid all physical contact. Instead of commenting on it, Dream turned his attention to Sapnap and helped the pyromancer peel his wet shirt off his skin. Thankfully, Sapnap was already warm to the touch, just getting out of the snow was enough for him to be able to warm himself up with his magic.

Once he was sure that his boyfriends were no longer in danger of hypothermia, Dream began to take off his own soaking clothing. Eventually all three of them were dressed in the clothing the piglin hybrid had provided. They were doing *miles* better than they were before, but neither Sapnap or George had spoken a single word since they got out of the cold, and even more worrying, George's lips were still blue, but he wouldn't let Dream get close enough to help warm up. Not that Dream would be any help, his natural body temperature was lower than a human's. He settled for making sure both Sapnap and George had blankets draped across their shoulders.

The others weren't much help either, not that Dream wanted their help. The kid, Tommy, hadn't taken his eyes off of them, glaring daggers into both Sapnap and George. Phil was sitting on the couch obviously trying hard to act naturally, but the worried glances he sent towards both them and Tommy gave him away. The piglin hybrid was the strangest. Dream could tell that he recognized the three of them as a threat, but he kept his back turned to them, busying himself in the kitchen, almost like he was purposefully trying to ignore them. The only time he even looked at the three of them was when he came back to take their wet clothing to hang it up to dry. Dream was hesitant at first, he didn't really trust these strangers with their things, but he knew their clothes would have to be dry by the time they wanted to leave, so he let the piglin take them.

He turned his focus back to his boyfriends, but neither of them were looking at him. Dream tried to reach for George again, to warm him up, to get him closer to the fire, to comfort him, anything, but the older man once again smacked his hand away. The masked man had to take a deep breath and push aside his emotions, which was unfortunate, he hated doing that because it was so hard to bring them back. It made George and Sapnap happy when he succeeded with human emotions, but right now he didn't need them to be happy, he needed them to be safe.

“Come on George, you're freezing, you need someone to help you warm up.” George's breathing picked up speed and he shook his head violently, still refusing to look Dream in the eyes. Frustrated, Dream turned to Sapnap, “Can you help him?”

Sapnap had been staring resolutely into the fireplace, but at least he glanced over at Dream when he spoke. The pyromancer then looked over at George and lifted his arm, inviting the older man to sit beside him under his blanket. George took one look at Sapnap and scrambled over to curl into his younger boyfriend's side. Dream had to completely turn off his human emotions before the

hurt could bubble up in his chest at the thought that George only wanted comfort if it didn't come from him. It wouldn't be a good idea to get upset during what was already an emotionally volatile situation.

After a few minutes George's skin had returned to a healthy color and Dream felt like he could breathe again. His boyfriends, the two most important people in his life, were going to be okay.

Then several things happened at once. A translucent man in a yellow sweater appeared through the floor next to Sapnap, "Hello!" he said in the cheeriest voice Dream had ever heard. Sapnap screamed and shot the man with a ball of fire that did nothing but fly through his chest and set the chair behind him on fire. The fire made Tommy scream and jump back, causing him to trip and land on the floor with a loud thud. At the sound screaming, the piglin ran into the room, sword drawn, which had George suddenly windmilling backwards until he was curled up on the floor against the wall and in tears. Dream was up on his feet and stood between Sapnap and the piglin in a second, his own sword in hand and pointed at the piglin hybrid, who was no doubt the biggest threat in the room, even if his instincts were screaming at him to attack the translucent man first.

"Technoblade!" The newcomer shouted excitedly while wearing the largest grin which only made the piglin hybrid flinch

"Wil-Ghostbur!" Tommy sat up and shouted at the man in the sweater. "What the hell man?"

Ghostbur cocked his head to the side, the pleasant smile never leaving his face, even with confusion flashing through his eyes. "Did I do something wrong?" The translucent man asked and Dream could feel heat on his back as Sapnap summoned another ball of fire to throw at Ghostbur. Technoblade instinctively lurched forward to stop Sapnap and Dream swung to protect his boyfriend.

"**ENOUGH!**" Phil appeared in the center of the chaos before Dream's sword could connect and everyone froze. His wings were open to their full size, and despite the bandages and how the man was a full head shorter than almost everyone in the room, just his sheer presence was enough to make him seem larger than life. "Everyone put your weapons down." He commanded and both Dream and Technoblade did so without hesitation, lowering their swords. He then turned to Sapnap, "Mate, you need to put out the chair."

Sapnap let out a shaky breath to calm himself down and the fires he caused died down with his fear.

Ghostbur floated over to where George was still panicking. "You look sad. Here, have some blue!" He said and shoved what looked like blue dye into George's hands. It was ridiculous thinking that something like that would cheer him up, but to Ghostbur's credit, George was so shocked by the ridiculousness of their situation that he broke into hysterical and watery laughs.

Another person burst into the room, "I am *so* sorry, I tried to stop him but-" he cut himself off mid sentence and stared at Dream.

He was tall, taller than everybody in the room by a large margin, but still looked young, maybe around Tommy's age. His features were striking, his face split down the middle, each half looking like two separate beings that were sewn together. He was definitely a hybrid of some sort, and Dream's eyebrows furrowed as he tried to think of what he could be. Something about him felt familiar and it made his stomach twist with anxiety.

Dream dropped his sword. "You- You're- *How are you not like them?*" He asked in Ender, making everyone stare at him.

“Wait, you can speak Ranboo?” Tommy asked and Dream almost wanted to laugh at the blonde’s complete lack of tact.

“*Like what?*” Ranboo responded, ignoring Tommy. Dream decided to do the same.

“*Feral.*” Dream understood Ranboo’s appearance now, and judging by the looks on George and Sapnap’s faces, they also understood. The dark half of the Ender hybrid wasn’t meant to look like that, it was from the skin of his Ender half being entirely covered by the same markings that stretched across Dream’s chest. He was sick, just like Dream, and the more the masked man thought about it, the more he realized that his other half, his hybrid half, was keeping him from fully turning into a mindless, feral enderman.

Ranboo looked confused. “*What do you mean? Feral? Like who?*”

“You don’t know.” Dream realized suddenly, switching back to English. “You don’t know what you are.” If Ranboo knew he was half Ender, then he would have already realized that he was sick.

“Dude, he can’t even remember his own name most of the time.” Technoblade snorted.

Ranboo stiffened, “I remember my name! I just forget things sometimes.”

“No offense Ranboo, but you’re definitely not all there up here, you know?” Tommy added, gesturing to his own head.

“Phil, *Phil*, what are they talking about?” Ghostbur stage whispered to the older man. His voice made Sapnap flinch and George stare, his hands still cupped around a pile of blue dye. Dream still couldn’t get a read on Ghostbur. He seemed harmless enough, yet whenever Ghostbur was near, all of Dream’s hair seemed to stand on end, and even worse, George and Sapnap were *terrified* of him.

“Not now Ghostbur.” Phil replied, shushing him

“Why do you keep calling him that?” George snapped.

Everyone except Sapnap looked in his direction. “What the hell are you on about?” Tommy asked.

“Ghostbur! Why are you calling him Ghostbur!” Dream wasn’t sure if George sounded afraid or furious, maybe both.

All of the strangers, with the exception of Ghostbur, fell silent. Techno wouldn’t meet anyone’s eyes, Tommy began fidgeting, Ranboo kept looking around like he was searching for a clue of what to say, and Phil- Phil was wearing a soft smile, but when Dream met his eyes, he could tell the older man had spent more time crying than not over the past few days. “He’s not Wilbur.” Phil said gently. “He’s only a shell of him really, just a ghost. He doesn’t remember most of Wilbur’s life or a lot of what made him *Wilbur.*”

“He’s a ghost?” Dream had heard of ghosts before, but he thought they were just a fairy tale. To be fair, the Nether was supposed to be a fairytale too, but the blaze rods in Sapnap’s pack were proof that fairy tales could be very real. Technoblade’s existence could probably count as proof as well considering how many piglins had been in the Nether, they had probably originated there and gotten to the overworld at some point in the past.

“No no no, you mentioned something about *what* I am.” Ranboo pointed at Dream accusingly,

“You don’t get to breeze right past that just because Wilbur’s a ghost.”

“Oh! You knew Alivebur!” Ghostbur laughed, interrupting the conversation to speak to George and Sapnap. “Were you friends? I always like Alivebur’s friends, they’re all very cool. Like Niki! I love Niki.”

“No.” Sapnap replied in a hoarse whisper, “We weren’t friends.”

“Oh. That’s too bad. You seem like you would make great friends.” Ghostbur said. *Everyone* winced at that, except for Ranboo, who obviously only knew about as much of what happened in Manburg as Dream did. Noticing the shift in mood, Ghostbur tilted his head to the side thoughtfully, “Did I say something wrong again? You all look sad. Here, have some blue!” He began floating around, shoving blue dye into everyone’s hands. It was uncomfortable and almost heart-breaking to watch, even for Dream who hadn’t even known Wilbur when he was alive.

“Maybe we should all sit down and try to be more civil.” Phil suggested once everyone’s hands were stained blue to Ghostbur’s tastes.

George rolled his eyes. “As if you deserve civil.”

Ranboo looked between George and his friends anxiously, obviously confused about the circumstances, “I still want to know what you meant.” He said to Dream, from the tone of his voice, the masked man could tell that Ranboo wasn’t going to leave him alone until he got answers.

He resigned himself to getting interrogated by a child, “Fine.” Even George and Sapnap looked curious, and given how secretive Dream was about his past and what he was, it made sense, but he wasn’t going to share anything they probably hadn’t already figured out on their own. If Dream was ever going to talk about that part of his life it would be to his boyfriends and *only* his boyfriends. These strangers weren’t privy to that, even if Ranboo was half Ender.

“You two probably have questions as well.” Phil gestured to Sapnap and George who both looked torn between insulting them some more and getting answers.

“I think that can wait, I want to know what- Wait, what even is your name?” Ranboo asked suddenly. Everyone suddenly looked sheepish when they realized that no introductions had ever been made.

“Dream.” He replied.

Techno snorted, “What kind of name is Dream?”

“Coming from a guy called Technoblade,” Dream shot back.

“That’s fair.”

“What the hell did you mean by *what* I am?” Ranboo interrupted their banter to get straight to the point. “Do you know me? And how did you speak, you know.” He gestured between the two of them lamely.

Dream didn’t even know where to start. He didn’t want to spend all night answering questions or just generally being pestered for answers, so he had to be careful and not give the hybrid ideas for any more questions he may have. Not only that, but he was also aware of George and Sapnap’s gazes practically drilling holes into the side of his head. This conversation was a minefield just waiting to blow up in his face.



“I don’t have a clue who you are.” Dream finally said, “but I can tell you’re an enderman hybrid.” Simple answers were often the best.

Ranboo frowned, “So you were asking why I’m not acting like an enderman then?”

“Pretty much.”

“Then what’s that language we were speaking? Enderman don’t speak.”

Dream shrugged, doing his best to feign ignorance. “It’s called Ender, I learned it from someone I knew a long time ago.” It was technically the truth even if it was purposefully misleading, he learned it from his parents after all, “I always just assumed that enderman could speak, just not to me.”

“Why wouldn’t they speak to you?” Phil asked and Dream instantly knew the older man could tell he was hiding something.

“I don’t know, it’s not like I can get close enough to ask without them attacking me.” Ranboo frowned again and started muttering to himself in Ender. Dream chose to him, hoping that no one else had any questions. He felt kind of bad not explaining everything he knew to Ranboo, but he could tell that the hybrid was safe from the sickness because of his non-Ender half so Dream didn’t feel the need to warn him about it.

To be fair, there were also plenty of things about enderman that Dream didn’t know, like why water was lethal for them and how they could teleport seemingly at will and he was doing just fine without having anyone to explain those things to him.

No one else spoke for several seconds. “So how come you were all wandering through the snow in the middle of a storm?” Techno finally asked, interrupting the silence.

“Why are you living out here in the middle of a storm?” George replied without missing a beat.

Sapnap laughed at the quip, but it sounded hollow, “Good one George.”

“I was just asking a question.”

“Well you guys have been asking a lot of those recently.” The pyromancer flipped between fear and anger fast enough to give Dream whiplash.

Techno scoffed, “I’m letting you three stay in my house so you don’t die in the storm outside, maybe you shouldn’t be rude to us.”

“Rude? *Rude*? I think I’m being absolutely fucking *pleasant* considering how the last time we saw each other you tried to *execute my boyfriend!*” If anybody spoke after that, Dream couldn’t say. He knew that something bad happened in Manburg, and he knew that whatever it was had been bothering his boyfriends for the longest time. It made sense that these people who George and Sapnap were so inclined to face with only suspicion and fear were the cause of it, but for some reason it just didn’t click in his head what they could have done to traumatize Sapnap and George until now.

The only thing Dream could hear was his own roaring blood as his eyes zeroed in on the piglin hybrid sitting across the room. “You did what?” Dream asked, his voice perfectly even.

Techno stiffened, whether it was out of fear or just him bracing for an attack, he didn’t know and was too furious to care. “They tried to burn down a building with us inside of it!”

Both Sapnap and Dream leapt to their feet, Dream going for an attack and Sapnap choosing to just shout obscenities at the piglin hybrid. George's hand clamped around Dream's wrist before he could lunge forward. "You'll lose." He whispered loud enough for only Dream to hear without making eye contact while Sapnap shouted. Dream wasn't sure if George was saying that because of his clairvoyance or if his fear of Techno was clouding his judgement of the hybrid's combat abilities.

"You tried to kill us first!" Sapnap screamed, having no problem getting into Techno's face, who was also now on his feet and towering over the pyromancer.

"You shouldn't have gotten in our way!"

"You shouldn't have tried to kill a town full of innocent people just because you hated the guy they voted for!"

Tommy then leapt to his feet to put himself in the mix. "They shouldn't have voted for Schlatt! Wilbur was president! He created L'Manburg!"

"I don't fucking care who was president, *he* -" Sapnap pointed up at the ceiling where Ghostbur was floating around with a frown on his face "-tried to kill us, ordered *you* to kill us, and you let him do it!" Dream couldn't remember ever seeing Sapnap look this furious before. The pyromancer was usually so laid back and Dream couldn't help but feel wrong about it. Instinctively, he tried to step forward to help him, but George stopped him, his hand still wrapped around Dream's wrist in an iron grip. "You were going to let him kill us so he could go ahead and kill half the city that you claim to love, but you obviously didn't give a damn about it, or you would have stopped him!"

"*Shut up!*" Tommy raged. "You weren't there!"

"Tommy-" Phil tried to interject.

Sapnap ignored the winged man to continue shouting. "I was there for enough to know that he would have been the worst president possible!"

"Fuck you! He was a great president before Schlatt. You don't have any room to judge when you killed Wilbur!" Tommy screamed and threw a punch at Sapnap.

Phil grabbed Tommy's arm before the hit could land, not that it mattered, it was so sloppy that Sapnap could have easily dodged it. "Wilbur killed himself Tommy."

"You're lying! Shut up, you're lying!" He sounded desperate, and while Dream couldn't relate, he had been around humans long enough to know that when being faced with the worst possible outcome, they were often devastated.

"*Tommy.*" Techno's voice cut through the chaos and hysteria and Tommy's mouth immediately snapped shut. "You know Wilbur wasn't himself at the end."

Dream had a feeling he was missing something, but he didn't care to find out what because it didn't matter, not when he knew how it affected his boyfriends. The nightmares, the silence, the attempts to act like nothing was wrong, Dream watched all of them with an aching heart without the ability to do a single thing about it.

George's grip loosened on his wrist and he took Dream's hand in his own, lacing their fingers together. His hand was cold and clammy and Dream gave his boyfriend's hand a comforting squeeze.

Tommy scowled at Techno. "Not that you did anything to stop him."

"What is that supposed to mean?" The piglin snapped back.

"I was the only one that tried to talk him out of it! You only encouraged him and his insanity!" The accusation hung in the air as everyone fell into an oppressive silence.

"Well what did you want me to do about it?"

"I don't know! You were the only one he still listened to!"

"I don't want to talk about Alivebur anymore." Wilbur interrupted and he floated down from the ceiling closer to eye-level.

Sapnap snorted, "Yeah, no kidding."

"Would anyone like some tea? Soup? Something warm might be nice given the weather outside." Phil said in a voice that was way too cheery for the mood in the room.

George cleared his throat, "Soup sounds nice." It was a peace offering, an easy way out of the emotionally charged conversation. Everyone mumbled in agreement and Phil and Techno disappeared into the kitchen. Everyone sat in silence until they returned a few minutes later with several bowls of soup precariously balanced in their arms. Dream accepted a bowl despite not actually being hungry. Sapnap must have felt the same because he just stirred his soup without taking a single bite, but George finished his bowl in record time and set the empty bowl aside.

"Why did you-" Sapnap began with a hoarse voice and stopped to clear his throat, "Why did you save us?"

Dream wasn't sure what he meant, but from the way Phil froze, he figured the question was directed at the winged man

"I-" He began, "I don't know."

"How could you not know? You probably could have saved *him* if you tried." George gestured towards Ghostbur who was floating over Tommy's shoulder and doing his best to annoy the blonde boy without much success, making the ghost look up at George.

"I couldn't tell you."

Ghostbur left Tommy's side and floated closer. "I'm glad he saved you," The ghost admitted, "I quite like being a ghost."

"Please don't say that." Tommy whispered, looking miserable.

Ghostbur paused thoughtfully. "I don't remember it, but I don't think Alivebur was a good person."

"No." Sapnap said, "He wasn't."

"Yes he was!" Tommy snapped. "He was, I know he was."

"Wilbur hadn't been good for a long time." Techno sighed.

Tommy looked frustrated as his head turned between Sapnap, George, and Techno. "He was good. He *had* to be good."

Silence.

“You know, Tubbo is president now.” Phil interrupted the silence with a change in topic.

“The kid with the horns?” Sapnap asked in a rare attempt at keeping the peace.

Phil nodded, “Yep. After Schlatt died Tubbo decided he wanted to be president to fix all of his father’s wrongdoings.”

“Schlatt was his dad?”

The winged man nodded.

“Brutal.”

“Yeah, no kidding.” Tommy said, repeating Sapnap’s words from earlier.

Everyone fell silent again and only the sounds of spoons scraping against the sides of bowls and slurping filled the small house, Dream himself having put aside his own bowl of soup and sitting still.

It was oppressive, the silence. Dream was hyper aware of everyone’s movements as they ate. He had a feeling that another fight was going to break out and he wanted to be ready to spring to his feet and protect his boyfriends at a moment’s notice. They didn’t deserve to have to face the people that traumatized them, so Dream would do his best to take them all on himself if he had to.

The mood was tense, and Dream was just waiting to see who would crack first.

In the end, it was Tommy. “I don’t see why we have to let them stay here. You didn’t have to let them in.”

“Do you want to be the one to get their corpses off my lawn?” Techno replied without missing a beat.

“You didn’t have a problem with making corpses when it was in Niki’s basement.” George snarked.

Dream snorted, “It’s not much of a lawn anyways.”

Phil sent Dream a harsh look and it took the masked man a few seconds to realize that it was because he had been relying on Dream to be the one to keep the peace on his side of the room. Dream didn’t care much for peace anyways. Not now, not after seeing the lasting effects spending only a few hours with them had on Sapnap and George.

Techno carried on, oblivious to Phil’s glare, “Not that a homeless man would have any idea what a lawn looks like.”

“I have a home.” Dream snapped.

“You do?” George asked.

Tommy burst into laughter.

“I do!”

“Oh really. Then why are you wandering around in the middle of nowhere?”

“That’s none of your business.” Sapnap snarled.

Techno’s eyes flicked over to Sapnap, “I don’t know. I might have to kick you guys out if you don’t give me any answers.”

“We’ve given you plenty of answers.” Sapnap replied.

Phil held up a hand, stopping Techno from answering. “We’re not going to kick them out.”

“Heh?” Techno glared at the winged man. “I just want to know why a bunch of guys that have it out for me are lurking around my house!”

“We didn’t even know you lived here. If we did then we wouldn’t have knocked on the door.” George said snidely.

Techno glared at him, “That’s a nice story, but why would I believe a bunch of homeless people?”

“I told you, I have a house!” Dream snapped. A vision of a garden gate in front of a yard overflowing with flowers and foliage surrounding a cozy cottage in the woods and a lonely man silently staring through the front window flashed behind Dream’s eyes and he deflated. “Well, maybe not anymore.” It was the closest thing Dream had to a home, but he wasn’t sure if he was welcome there anymore, not after how he left.

“Ha!” Techno laughed, “You *are* homeless!”

“*Techno* .” Phil interrupted before the piglin hybrid could continue.

Ghostbur floated over next to Dream. “It’s okay that you’re homeless. Ranboo is homeless too.”

At the mention of his name, the enderman hybrid looked up. “What? I have a house.”

“You have a shed in the backyard.” Tommy said.

“I don’t see a difference.” Ranboo replied and Tommy burst into laughter.

Dream didn’t feel like laughing. Neither did Sapnap or George.

Phil suddenly clapped his hands, “I think it’s time we start getting ready for bed, it’s getting late.” It wasn’t really, but Dream understood the desire to stop the stilted conversations and arguments. “You three can take the guest room-”

“Hey! That’s where I’m sleeping!”

“And Tommy and Ranboo can share the sofa bed out here.” Phil continued, ignoring Tommy’s protests.

Dream was grateful for the chance to get away from everyone, and from the way Sapnap and George both relaxed slightly, they were too. Phil led them down the hall and showed them into the guest room. It was messy and obviously lived in by Tommy, making the older man grumble. “There’s clean bedding in the closet, I’ll get Tommy to clean this up. There’s a bathroom next across the hall you can use to wash up.”

Sapnap and George both disappeared into the bathroom while Dream started to change the sheets. He had a feeling it was because they didn’t want to face Tommy when he came to get his stuff.

A few seconds later, Tommy appeared in the door of the guest room and scowled at Dream. “Hey

bitch.” He said as he entered.

Dream only gave him a confused look.

“You know, you should really clean this stuff up, it bad manners to make a mess when you’re a guest.” Tommy gestured around the room at the stuff that was obviously his.

Dream couldn’t believe the audacity the kid had and burst into laughter. “I am not cleaning up your crap.”

“Why not?”

“Because you’re a child and children clean up their own messes.”

“I’m not a child!” Tommy replied, “I am a big man!”

“Right. And I’m a llama in a mask.”

“You know, you really should go get that checked out because I don’t think llamas are supposed to look like that.”

Dream snorted.

“Why do you wear a mask anyways?”

“Why aren’t you cleaning up your stuff?” Tommy scowled and started shoving his clothes into an empty bag that was on the floor.

“You know, you’re really annoying.”

Dream raised an eyebrow and looked at Tommy in disbelief. “I’m the annoying one?”

“Ohhhhh! You’re a bitch! A bitchboy in a stupid mask!”

“And you’re a child.” Dream replied.

“I hate you.”

“The feeling’s mutual.”

Tommy grabbed the last of his stuff and left the room in a hurry, brushing past Sapnap who was standing in the door.

“Weird.” Sapnap muttered, watching the blonde boy disappear.

“What’s weird.”

The pyromancer shrugged, “He’s just way different than he was before. Less of a shell.”

Dream hummed in response and with Sapnap’s help, they managed to change the sheets just in time for George to come scrambling into the room with all three of their clothes piled in his arms. George closed the bedroom door behind himself and immediately blocked it by tucking the chair from the desk under the door handle. Once the door was barricaded, both George and Sapnap seemed to deflate, being tense for so long had obviously been draining.

The three of them started changing out of their borrowed clothes and into their own, now dry after

an hour of being laid out in front of the fire. It took Dream a second to realize that George would have had to return to the front room by himself to get the clothes and he looked up at his boyfriend in surprise.

“Ranboo was the only one in there.” George supplied without Dream having to ask. The masked man nodded. “He’s-” George chewed on his lip as he tried to find the right word, “-strange.”

“You just wanted to ask him questions about endermen, didn’t you.” Dream accused lightly. “You just used getting our clothes as an excuse.”

George shrugged unapologetically.

“Whatever the reason, I’m just grateful to be out of that pig’s old clothes.” Sapnap sighed and collapsed on the bed. He then rolled over and made grabbing motions at his boyfriends, “I want cuddles.” He whined.

Dream and George laughed and climbed into bed themselves, George against the wall, Sapnap in the middle, and Dream on the outside between them and the door. “Get some sleep,” He murmured once they were all comfortable, “I’ll keep watch.”

“You always do.” George yawned and curled into Sapnap who was already fast asleep.

Once they were both asleep, Dream relaxed into his boyfriend’s side, the pyromancer’s natural body temperature keeping him nice and warm, and he reached out with his senses until he could feel the whole house and tell where everyone was within it. Phil was in the room directly above them, fast asleep. There was a cold spot in that room as well that Dream interpreted to be Ghostbur. It was harder to keep track of the ghost since he didn’t breathe, but Dream knew he just had to take some time to get used to it. Tommy and Ranboo were in the front room, Tommy trying to push Ranboo off the sofa bed while the enderman hybrid held on for dear life and continued making polite protests. Techno was on the floor above Phil, in the attic. He was laying down in bed, but Dream could tell that he wasn’t asleep.

Techno was so still that Dream would have thought he was dead if it weren’t for his breathing. Several hours went by with Dream focused on Techno, scrutinizing his actions, until the piglin hybrid suddenly sat up. Dream had to force himself to not tense up, knowing that if he did, Sapnap would wake instantly, expecting a fight.

He waited patiently as Techno left his room and climbed down the ladder to the first floor, passing Tommy and Ranboo who were finally asleep in the front room. Ranboo was sleeping on the sofa bed while Tommy was on the floor, having fallen off earlier while trying to push Ranboo off the bed. He ended up staying there after insisting that he had done it on purpose.

Techno walked silently down the hall until he came to a stop outside of the guest room door. Dream expected the piglin hybrid to knock or try to open the door, but he just stood there without making a sound. Several minutes went by with nothing happening before he got curious. Dream slipped out of bed, careful not to wake Sapnap, and silently went over to the door. Still nothing. He moved the chair out of the way and slowly pulled open the door until he was face to face with Techno.

The piglin hybrid stepped back, giving Dream room to step into the hall. The masked man left the guest room and closed the door behind himself. “What do you want?” He asked in a whisper.

Techno’s ears twitched, “Stop doing that.”

“Doing what?” He studied the hybrid across from him for any signs of aggression.

He stiffened. “That!”

“What do you mean?”

Techno glared at Dream. “ *Watching* . It’s keeping me awake.”

Cautiously, Dream pulled back his awareness from the rest of the house until it was person sized again. The tension immediately left Techno’s shoulders.

Dream blinked, he didn’t realize other people could potentially *feel* it when he expanded his awareness like that. There must be something about Techno that let him notice these things.

The two of them stayed standing in the hall, staring at each other, for several minutes before Techno broke the silence.

“Wanna fight?”

“Yes.”

“Meet me outside.” Techno turned on his heel and disappeared down the hall.

Dream opened the door of the guest room and went to grab his sword. After a moment of hesitation, he tapped George on the shoulder until the clairvoyant woke up. His gaze met Dream’s and after a few seconds, he rolled his eyes. “You’re going to lose.”

“If you say so.”

George scoffed, offended. “How dare you question my ability like that.”

“Just lock the door behind me, future boy.” Dream rolled his eyes, grabbed his sword, and left.

~

He lost.

~

The sun was just peaking over the horizon when Dream and Techno finally called it quits. The storm had died out sometime in the first hour they had been fighting, which was about when Dream really started to lose. They were evenly matched when the wind and the snow made it hard for Techno to see or even hear and smell Dream, a problem the masked man didn’t have given his extra senses, but once the wind stopped and the snow stopped falling, Dream lost his advantage and subsequently every single fight.

They weren’t fighting for real, it was sparing and they didn’t actually want to kill each other. Part of Dream wanted to know who would win if they were fighting for real, if they were actually trying to kill each other, if they had a reason to win worth more than their own life, but mostly Dream was glad that he didn’t have to find out.

Tired and aching, Dream and Techno dragged themselves back into the house. Phil and Ranboo were in the kitchen quietly conversing over tea. The winged man paused to give Dream and Techno a small smile before he continued talking. Tommy was still snoring away, now on the sofa bed, probably having been put there after Ranboo woke up, and Ghostbur floated around Tommy watching him sleep until he saw Techno. Techno climbed up the ladder to his room and Ghostbur



followed him, happily chatting away in a hushed tone as he phased through the ceiling.

Dream went down the hall to the guest room where he paused, realizing he wouldn't be able to get in until one of his boyfriends got up and moved the chair blocking the door. He shifted from foot to foot, unsure of what to do. Going back to the kitchen was a possibility, but he didn't want to face the awkward conversation with Phil and Ranboo. He could go outside and climb in through the window, but that was a sure way to get a fireball to the face if he accidentally woke Sapnap.

Awkward conversation then.

He leaned his sword against the wall outside of the bedroom and went back to the front room. Seeing Dream, Phil gestured to an empty chair. "Would you like some tea?" He asked quietly as Dream sat down.

Dream didn't answer and Phil took that as agreement, grabbing Dream a mug and pouring him some tea. "You looked cold." He offered in explanation. Until the cup of tea was in front of him, Dream hadn't been sure if he wanted it, but now he was grateful for it as he took a sip.

He looked up to see both Phil and Ranboo watching him curiously and Dream realized that they had both seen him out in the snow sparring with Technoblade without a jacket on. Why Techno hadn't thought to comment on it, Dream wasn't sure, but it probably had to do with the fact that the piglin hybrid already realized Dream wasn't human just from how he was able to "watch" people from several rooms away.

"I don't get cold." He offered in explanation.

"How?" Ranboo asked.

Dream glanced at the enderman hybrid. "Do you get cold?"

Ranboo's eyes widened in surprise, obviously not expecting the question, or the implications of it. "No. I don't"

The masked man hummed thoughtfully and took another sip of his tea.

"So you do know more than you let on then." Phil said.

He shrugged, "Maybe."

"Oh come on. You can't keep this from me. I want to know what I've forgotten." Ranboo protested.

"No." Dream replied, "You don't."

There must have been something in the tone of his voice because Ranboo and Phil didn't ask him any more questions. It was a good thing too, Ranboo had emotions like humans did, and if he found out that there was nothing left of the things he wanted to remember, it wouldn't be pretty. Ranboo didn't have to know about what happened to their people, and if he was lucky, he would never find out.

Some time later, George and Sapnap emerged from the hallway, their eyes flitting around the room cautiously, only relaxing when they didn't see Techno or Ghostbur in the room. Phil stood up to start making breakfast, leaving room for Sapnap and George to sit down.

More silence.

If Sapnap and George didn't need food and rest to survive, Dream would have packed up their stuff and left as soon as the storm died out. Instead they were stuck in a tiny house in the middle of nowhere trapped into social niceties with people that wanted to rip each other's throats out.

"How did you sleep?" Ranboo asked timidly.

Dream sipped his tea and looked over at his boyfriends to see their reactions.

"Fine." George said.

"It was a little weird to sleep in a bed after being on the road for so long." Sapnap added conversationally.

"And you?" Ranboo asked Dream.

Sapnap looked at Dream with a shit-eating grin. "Yeah Dream, how did *you* sleep?"

"Uh." Dream said intelligently.

"He has insomnia." George interrupted before the conversation could get any more derailed.

"Oh, Techno has insomnia too."

They were saved from any more small talk by Phil setting down plates on the table in front of them. He had made pancakes.

Dream dumped his pancakes onto Sapnap's plate the second Phil's back was turned, he wasn't hungry and after the pyromancer refused to eat the soup the night before, Sapnap was probably starving.

"Ranboo, do you want to wake Tommy for breakfast?" Phil asked the enderman hybrid.

Ranboo paused while halfway through chewing a bite to send Phil a withering look. He quickly swallowed, "Not particularly, no."

"You and Tommy have to get along eventually." Phil admonished.

"Tell him that."

Dream snorted. He had no doubt that Tommy was the instigator behind every argument between the two boys. Ranboo was *too* polite and Tommy seemed selfish enough to take advantage of that.

Sapnap stood suddenly and Dream looked over to see that both he and George had finished eating. Good, he was looking forward to leaving, and based on his boyfriends' anxious expressions, they were ready to go as well.

"Do you want some more pancakes?" Phil asked.

Sapnap shook his head and Dream slipped out of the room while the winged man was distracted. "No, I'm good. Do you need help cleaning up?"

"Tommy and Techno haven't eaten yet so I can't clean up quite yet. Just put your dishes in the sink if you feel like being helpful."

Having successfully left the kitchen unnoticed, Dream went back to the guest room and started packing up their things. There wasn't much to pack, it was mostly just gathering up their bags and

weapons, which only took him a few seconds. He turned to leave the room only to collide with George in the doorway.

“Nice job Dream.” George snarked.

Dream rolled his eyes, “It’s your fault too.”

“Whatever. We can’t leave out the front door, for some reason Phil is gonna be determined to make us stay.”

“Why? What’s he doing?”

George raised an eyebrow in disbelief, “Nothing yet.”

“What? Oh!” Sometimes Dream forgot George was clairvoyant at the most inconvenient times. “How are we going to leave then?”

“I was hoping you would come up with something with your ten thousand IQ brain.”

“What’s IQ?”

“I don’t know,” George shrugged, “It’s something I heard Sapnap say. Apparently the bigger your IQ number is, the smarter you are.”

“Is ten thousand a big number then?”

“It’s bigger than one.”

Dream smacked George on the shoulder.

“Well?” George asked.

The masked man looked at him in confusion. “Well what?”

“Any ideas on how we’re going to get out of here? Sapnap can only distract Phil for so long.”

Dream glanced around the room looking for inspiration until an idea popped into his head. “We could climb out the window.”

George looked past Dream’s shoulder at the window, it was a decent size, large enough for them to fit through, but the snow outside was piled high enough to completely block it. “And how do you suggest we get through that?” He asked.

“Sapnap could melt it.” Dream shrugged.

“What can I melt?” Sapnap asked as he appeared in the doorway behind George.

“You’re here! Perfect.” George said. He pulled the pyromancer into the room and swiftly blocked the door with the chair again. “Open the window and melt the snow so we can leave.”

It didn’t take them long to leave after that, and only a few minutes later the three of them were in the treeline, the silhouette of Techno’s house barely visible among the snow in the distance. “Are you guys sure you’re okay with this?” Dream asked.

George glanced back at him over his shoulder. “Okay with what?”

“Leaving. Not getting closure.” Both Sapnap and George stopped and stared at Dream with identical incredulous looks. “What?”

“I don’t need closure from them.” George replied. “And they don’t deserve to feel forgiven.” He turned and started marching away with a determined look on his face.

“Oh.”

“Did you expect something different?” Sapnap asked him.

Dream shrugged, “I guess I just assumed that facing them would be more conclusive.”

Sapnap snorted and bumped shoulders with Dream as they started following George, but at a much slower pace. “That *is* how it usually is in all the books and plays, but in real life it doesn’t work like that.”

“What do you mean?”

“We don’t have to forgive them to heal and we shouldn’t depend on anyone else to make ourselves feel better. We’ll find our own conclusion, without them.”

Dream still didn’t get it, human’s were complicated and weird, but if Sapnap and George both agreed on something, it was usually worth listening to.

He took one last look at the house behind them, there was nothing special about it, not in it’s appearance or the people inside. It was just a pitstop on their journey, it held no answers, no reasons, only four walls and a roof. Dream turned his back on it and followed the path forward.

## Chapter End Notes

This chapter was supposed to be less than 5k, but here we are at 8.7k words. Writing this was also like pulling teeth because there were so many characters that I kept forgetting to have them involved, and I had to keep finding ways to interrupt the dialogue and make it less monotonous. Anyways, sorry for the wait, I hope ya’ll enjoyed it.

# Make a Rule, Break a Rule

## Chapter Summary

Haha George and Sapnap angst go brrrr

## Chapter Notes

cw: There's a lot of detailed description of death and burning and dying from fire so if that's not your thing I've summarized the chapter in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sapnap once read that meeting a pyromancer was like stepping into fire. It was said like it was a bad thing, like it was a horrible agony to experience, but Sapnap never understood. He remembers his father, how he always smelled like burning pine and the way his mother would always lean into him, whether he was sitting beside her or just brushing past. He remembers a late night at the kitchen table, long after his father went to bed, sat across from his mother, both of them bent together pouring over the same book until she grew tired and loose-lipped. Then Sapnap could get answers to almost any question he could think to ask. “Your eyes are salvation in a world filled with evil things,” she told him, “Like torches in the night, a saving grace everyone can see when darkness closes in.”

He wouldn't be able to forget how she leaned towards him, her eyes gleaming so brightly in the candlelight he could have sworn she was a pyromancer too, “Some things need to be burned, Panda. It's how we make light.”

To him, fire is not agony. Fire is comforting like a childhood blanket that still fits over his shoulders just right, the memory of being tucked between his parents as they told him a bedtime story, but not everyone sees fire like he does.

Sapnap learned that the hard way.

It's burned to the backs of his eyelids, his parents chained to a pyre, how his mother turned to ashes long before his father suffocated from the smoke. Did you know that pyromancers will not burn, even in death? After the hunters were gone and Sapnap was able to crawl out of his hiding spot, the only thing left to bury was his father's body and a pile of ashes.

He doesn't blame the fire. Wildfire does not choose what to burn, does not have empathy for what it consumes, cannot discern between what is worth burning and what is worth preserving. No, he blames the people, the hunters, that stormed his village, rounded up every pyromancer and ashmaking sympathizer, and burned them at the stake.

There is a long tradition of hunting pyromancers, a tradition that has all but died out in most places in the world, but a tradition nonetheless. People are afraid of pyromancers, they view them as tyrants, as volatile and angry, and from those beliefs come fear, come hunters. No pyromancer is inherently evil, but after years of discrimination and being hunted like it's a game, some choose to

be exactly what people believe them to be.

Ashes to ashes, hunters and pyromancers going back and forth, just adding fuel to the fire.

That's why, whenever Sapnap lit a campfire or held a flame in his hand instead of a torch when they travelled at night and George flinched, Sapnap felt fear claw at his throat until it felt like breathing smoke and ashes between his fingers. He didn't know what he would do if their new companion, new friend, hated pyromancers. Dream absolutely *adored* George, even if the masked boy kept more secrets from George than he did from Sapnap. He wasn't sure who Dream would pick if it came down to it, if George really feared pyromancers so much that it was too hard to hide.

It made Sapnap bitter when Dream didn't notice. There was a very clear dynamic in the group that left Sapnap and George fighting for Dream's attention. Sure, there were times when they got along and Sapnap could forget the pit that had been forming in his stomach since George joined them, but the moment he did something that reminded George of his magic, it was like they were strangers again.

Sapnap started making rules for himself. He wasn't allowed to get mad at George, he wasn't allowed to shout, he couldn't talk about his dad or the magic he inherited, and most of all, he wasn't allowed to use his magic around George.

If he followed those rules then George wouldn't have to be afraid of him and then there wouldn't be any problems, right?

*Right?*

It became a problem.

All magic can be classified into two categories, magic that you pull from the world around you and magic that comes from inside you. Pyromancers are the latter. They are born with fire inside them, and while they can't be burned by Wildfire, they have no power over it either.

When Sapnap stopped using his magic, it built up inside him until he was bursting at the seams with fire that had nowhere to go. His skin grew hot, even for a pyromancer, and his eyes always had a faint glow, more so than usual, but Sapnap could live with all that if it meant he wouldn't cause problems for Dream and George's friendship. What he couldn't live with was the pain.

Too much magic *hurt*. It made his blood feel like daggers as it raced through his veins, his bones expanding and shrinking, every nerve so sensitive that Sapnap could swear his hair being cut felt like a wound to the chest.

For someone with superhuman senses, it took Dream an embarrassingly long time to notice that something was wrong, and even longer to ask about it. "Sap, are you okay?" He asked one evening while George was napping. The older boy still wasn't used to traveling for a whole day and often fell asleep as soon as they set up camp.

Sapnap set aside the flint and steel he was holding to try and light the campfire and met Dream's gaze with what he hoped was a reassuring smile, "Yeah man, I'm fine." He wasn't sure if he was successful because Dream didn't waver. "Why, what's up?"

The two of them stared at each other in silence. "Nothing really." Dream finally replied and jumped to his feet. "You light the fire, I think I saw some berries earlier that I want to pick."

"Okay..." Sapnap said, uneasy. He watched Dream walk away until he completely disappeared

from sight before turning back to light the fire.

The flint and steel was gone.

Sapnap swore.

Perhaps Dream was more perceptive than he led on. Dream always seemed to surprise him when the pyromancer least expected it.

~

George grew up with a few universal truths. The sun always rose in the east, his parents were always right, and pyromancers were the greatest evil to ever walk the earth. He knows differently now, having assholes for parents usually leads to questioning their beliefs once you're old enough to recognize that the way they treat you is wrong.

It didn't change that they were his parents, that he loved them just as much as he hated them, that a part of him would always long for the recognition and love and attention that normal parents gave their children.

It didn't change how they died.

George knew Sapnap was a pyromancer from the moment they met, but he didn't fully grasp what that meant until they were on the road and he watched the younger boy light their campfire with the snap of his fingers. He wasn't able to stop the full body flinch and he wasn't able to stop Sapnap from noticing it either. George wasn't sure if he should feel guilty about it.

It's just- watching Sapnap wield fire so casually was *terrifying*. He was old enough to know that his parents were wrong about pyromancers, but he would never be able to forget what it looked like as they were burned, in an instant, to an ashen husk with the snap of a pyromancer's fingers. Even worse what it *smelled* like.

Pork roast. The good kind that was smoked for hours to perfection, until the fat was dripping into the fire below. It used to be mouth-watering.

Now it only brought bile to his mouth.

Still, he didn't blame Sapnap. The fear was instinctual, but it didn't stop him from wanting to be the pyromancer's friend.

It made George bitter that Sapnap didn't notice, that he couldn't see how much George was willing to try, but maybe he just wasn't trying hard enough.

He started making rules for himself. Don't look at Sapnap when he used his magic, don't get too close either, if he didn't see or feel the heat, then he wouldn't have a reason to flinch. He wasn't allowed to antagonize Sapnap, making the boy mad only brought his magic closer to the surface, and even though he trusted that the pyromancer wouldn't lose control, he couldn't stop adrenaline from flooding his veins.

If he followed the rules, then Sapnap wouldn't know he was afraid, right?

*Right?*

Sapnap stopped using his magic and George knew he had failed at hiding his fear. He didn't know how to tell the younger boy that he didn't mind being afraid. All he could think about was Sapnap

sitting at his kitchen table, crying into a bowl of rabbit stew, and all he could feel was guilt for making it worse.

Waking up to the pyromancer swearing, probably louder than he meant to, had George immediately alert. “Are you okay?” he asked, making Sapnap jump.

“I’m *fine* .” Sapnap replied harshly. George flinched and immediately felt guilty at how it made the younger boy tense up.

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah. Why do you guys worry so much?”

“Because you’re our friend.”

Sapnap got an odd look on his face that George couldn’t decipher. “Am I?”

That *hurt* . Knowing he failed so much at being a friend that Sapnap thought he hated him? It was almost worse than the smell of cooking pork. “You’re acting like I hate you.”

“ *You’re* acting like you do.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. Oh.”

“I don’t.”

“Then why do you avoid me like I killed your family?” It was harsh and angry and it didn’t even matter because George was sucking in a sharp breath before he even registered Sapnap’s tone.

He would probably feel guilty when he learned the truth, but sometimes, like setting a bone, pain is the only way to fix things. “You didn’t, but a pyromancer did.” Sapnap’s eyes widened in alarm. “I don’t blame you. They were terrible parents and they were wrong about pyromancers, but it’s still hard to forget.”

“You-”

“I trust you.” Sapnap looked at George in disbelief. “I *do* .”

Sapnap’s eyes glowed strongly and he snapped at the unlit campfire behind him until it roared to life, taller than the trees around them, as he let his built up magic burst violently out of him.

George wheeled backwards, eyes wide in fear.

“Liar.”

The older boy was on his feet in an instant, finger shoved into the pyromancer’s face. “You don’t have to believe me, I’m going to keep flinching at fire and avoiding the smell of cooked fat, I can’t just forget how they died overnight, but I’m old enough to face my fears. You’re just a kid, so stop acting like my trauma is *your* problem.”

They stared at each other, neither willing to back down, until Sapnap broke the silence. “You’re not *that* much older than me.”

“Whatever you say.” George grinned, knowing he won this round.



“You’re not!”

~

Dream wasn’t sure when he first realized it, because it crept up on him, slow enough that he wasn’t able to put a name to it until it seemed like it was too late.

*Animosity .*

There was a tension between Sarnap and George and Dream was pretty sure he was the only thing keeping it from completely boiling over. Sarnap was constantly walking on eggshells around the older boy and only hurting himself in the process and George continued to watch and do nothing about it.

It made Dream bitter towards George that he refused to act. He realized that if the two of them were never going to confront each other unless he made them. It was simpler to do than he thought. All it took was stealing a flint and steel and leaving the two of them alone.

When he returned to their camp and saw the two of them bickering with grins on their faces, he knew everything had worked out fine.

That was when Dream made a rule for himself. There were three of them now, and there would always be the three of them, Dream would make sure of it.

## Chapter End Notes

This is an embarrassingly short chapter for how long it took me to write, but I know y'all will forgive me anyways and I love you for it. Luckily, school is almost over and I will have plenty of time to write starting at the end of next week.

Summary: Sarnap's parents were killed by pyromancer hunters and burned alive at the stake. George's parent's were burned to death by a pyromancer in front of him which is why he has a history of being uneasy around Sarnap and feeling nauseous from the smell of cooking meat. Sarnap tries to hide his pyromancer traits to keep George from having to relive his trauma, George confronts him about how he is old enough to face his fears and he isn't going to let Sarnap, who is still technically a kid, self destruct just so he can be slightly more comfortable. They make up and begin bickering like nothing happened, which makes Dream relieved.

# Fractures

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap, George, and Dream finally have a lead on Dream's mysterious quest.

## Chapter Notes

Ahaha yeah I totally am good at keeping to a writing schedule, don't @ me

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

In the end, Sapnap never got the chance to pay for the book he accidentally stole. There just wasn't any time between Dream spending all night restlessly reading the journal cover to cover and Sapnap being unable to get a wink of sleep as he watched the masked man pace around the clearing they were camped in. It was exhausting just to watch him, and for the first time ever, Sapnap was jealous of his boyfriend's ability to never sleep.

It was both the longest and shortest night of Sapnap's life. He wasn't sure if he had even fallen asleep or, at some point, if he had dozed between one blink and the next. Either way, he was completely exhausted. Looking at the dark circles under his boyfriend's eyes, it was obvious that George didn't fare much better during the night.

The masked man was so wound up by the time the sun started peeking over the horizon that George and Sapnap began silently packing their things. They both knew without Dream saying anything that he would be unable to wait any longer to go in search of an end portal now that he finally had a solid lead. George packed up their bedrolls while Sapnap put out the fire and made sure their bags were in order.

The sun still wasn't fully above the horizon by the time they were ready to go, but Dream seemed completely oblivious to what was happening around him.

"Dream." Sapnap called, trying to pull Dream from his thoughts.

The masked man continued muttering to himself and the pyromancer finally had enough. He was running on barely two hours of sleep and Dream's anxious pacing wasn't going to get them any closer to a whatever portal, so without any sense of self preservation, Sapnap snatched the journal from his hands.

Faster than Sapnap could track with his eyes, Dream's hand shot out and grabbed him by the wrist in a tight grip, tight enough that Sapnap could feel the bones of his wrist grind together. *I bet he could break my arm*, Sapnap thought before the pain caught up to him. "*Dream!*" He shouted, successfully shaking Dream from his thoughts. He immediately let go of Sapnap as if he had been burned and stumbled backwards.

"Are you okay?" George gently took the journal from Sapnap and tucked it under his arm so he could take a look at Sapnap's wrist. It was already starting to bruise, but he nodded anyway. The

shock of Dream reacting so violently drowned out any pain he felt in the moment.

“I-I’m sorry I-” Dream stuttered.

George whipped around and glared at the masked man, but Sapnap interrupted before he could begin yelling. “It’s fine.”

“It’s *not* fine!”

“It’s not fine!”

Both Dream and George shouted at the same time, making Sapnap wince. “I said I’m fine, so I’m fine.” He snapped in response.

“You didn’t say *you* were fine, you said *it’s* fine, those are two completely different things!” George sounded angry, more so than Sapnap had heard him in a long time, and it startled him. “Dream fucking *hurt you* . That’s *not* fine.”

Dream made a sound that sounded like something Sapnap could only describe as an injured animal, “I didn’t-”

“Didn’t *what* ?”

“It was an accident! I didn’t mean to!”

“Didn’t mean to?” George demanded, “Didn’t *mean* to? You’re perfectly capable of controlling your own actions. You could have broken his wrist and you’re telling me it would have been by *accident*?”

“It’s really not that bad-” Sapnap tried again.

George cut him off before he could continue, “I don’t care if it’s not that bad, *it shouldn’t have happened* .”

“I’m sorry. *I’m so sorry* .”

“Look, let’s just,” Sapnap made vague gestures towards the book in George’s hands, “The journal, what’s it say?”

George seemed unsatisfied, but Sapnap wasn’t going to budge. It was obvious that Dream didn’t mean to hurt him and Sapnap was willing to forgive him for it, or at least not get upset about it until they got Dream home, even if his wrist was starting to hurt like hell now that the shock was wearing off. If they managed to get to ‘the end’ then, maybe, his boyfriend wouldn’t be acting so strange and it would be easier to understand what was going on in his head.

Dream glanced between his boyfriends several times, trying to get a read on their thoughts, but Sapnap wasn’t giving anything away.

Finally, Dream answered, “To open an end portal, we need to get twelve eyes of ender.”

George opened his mouth to say something, no doubt to say something angry on Sapnap’s behalf again, but the pyromancer interrupted him before he could steer the conversation back towards what happened. “Okay, how do we get those?”

“We’ll have to make them from ender pearls and blaze powder which you get from killing certain types of mobs.”

“Alright, let’s start with ender pearls.” Sapnap suggested, if only to get them on the move and distract George from starting another fight. He understood the older man’s frustrations, Sapnap was frustrated too, because the longer they travelled without any answers, the more Dream changed. He somehow became *heavier* while also being *less* in a way that Sapnap wasn’t sure he could describe with words. Sapnap suspected that George knew at least part of the reason, because every time Dream acted a little less *Dream* -like, the older man would get a guilty look in his eyes. Maybe it was because they had been on the road for so long, but now that Dream finally had a clue, Sapnap was scared that his masked boyfriend may become a different person entirely.

Dream winced, “Don’t worry about that, I’ll get those on my own.”

“No you won’t.” George snapped, “We’re doing this together, alright? Even if I’m mad at you, I’m still not going to let you do go off to do something stupid and dangerous on your own.”

“It’s not dangerous.”

“*Liar* .”

Sapnap blinked. George looked so sure of what he was saying that Sapnap wondered if it was because he saw something with his clairvoyance or if it was just because of how well he knew Dream.

“Then we’ll do it together.” Sapnap said before Dream could object. “We also need to get whatever the hell blaze powder is.”

“That comes from crushing up blaze rods which I think are like the bones of blazes. They’re some kind of fire mob that can be found in nether fortresses. I’ve never really heard of them before.”

“Nether fortresses?” Sapnap asked, alarmed, “Are you saying that we need to go to the nether?”

“You’re joking.” George said in complete disbelief, and honestly, Sapnap completely agreed. “The nether isn’t real! It’s just a fairy tale that parents use to scare their kids into behaving.”

That was news to Sapnap, “Really? Scare them?”

“Well yeah, it’s like a cave dimension that’s only filled with fire and-” He paused as his words caught up to him, “It’s something only pyromancer hunters do, isn’t it?”

“Probably.”

Dream shook his head, “Where do you think piglin hybrids came from?” Dream’s words were such an unexpected reminder of Sapnap and George’s disastrous date in Manberg that they both fell into grim silence. Their boyfriend still didn’t know the details of what happened and George and Sapnap still weren’t ready to share. The masked man paused, noticing the sudden turn in their mood, “Is everything okay?”

Sapnap shook his head as if he could physically shake the sour thoughts from himself. “Yeah, we’re fine.”

“I guess we just didn’t think about it.” George gave his boyfriend a smile that didn’t quite reach his eyes.”

“Yeah! I mean- Piglins. The nether. It’s like two separate pieces of information. How were we supposed to connect them?” Sapnap complained.

“You’re such an idiot.” Dream laughed, obviously grateful Sapnap returned to his usual laid back attitude.

Sapnap gave Dream a light shove in response to his comment, the masked man stumbled while he laughed and it made his heart flutter. It was strange to be reminded of the mundane things Dream did because he loved his boyfriends. Sapnap knew beyond a doubt that he could push Dream with all his strength and the masked man wouldn’t move, but he chose to stumble anyways. He wondered if it was instinct for Dream to react like that with Sapnap and George or if he chose to be vulnerable. He wondered if there were ways that *he* softened himself for Dream and George without realizing it. The thought both terrified and thrilled him.

“So how do we get there?” George asked, shaking Sapnap from his thoughts.

“We need to make a nether portal. This guy, Illumina, knows his stuff, or at least I hope he does.” Dream held out his hand to George until he reluctantly handed over the journal. “From what I can tell, we need to make a large ring out of obsidian and then light a fire in it with a flint and steel. That should immediately open the portal and we should be able to step right through it and start looking for a nether fortress.”

“Obsidian.” George stated. “Do you know how hard it is to get obsidian?” It didn’t sound like a question when he asked.

“Um.”

“Extremely difficult Dream. The three of us combined have probably never seen the amount of gold it would take to buy enough obsidian to make a portal and making the obsidian ourselves requires moving lava. *Lava!* We aren’t equipped to handle that!”

“I’ll think of something!”

Sapnap cleared his throat, making both his boyfriends look at him. “I mean, technically, I could handle lava.”

“*Technically?* ”

“Well, in theory.”

George threw his hands up in exasperation. “In theory isn’t really gonna cut it! I really don’t want my boyfriend becoming the first pyromancer that *actually managed to burn to death* .”

“Awww.” Dream cooed.

“What? What could you possibly be awing at?”

“You called Sapnap your boyfriend. And you’re worried about him. It’s cute.”

The older man turned bright red at Dream’s teasing words. “W-well he is my boyfriend. And so are you, idiot.”

“Awww .” Both Dream and Sapnap said together.

“Whatever! Let’s just go find some lava so Sapnap can die and I can be right like always.” George turned on his heel and stomped away as both his boyfriends burst into laughter.

They didn’t really have a plan as they set off, none of them had any experience looking for lava. It

wasn't like lava was very common on the surface, but going underground ran the risk of running into mobs, and even though all three of them were skilled at combat, it was still incredibly dangerous.

The three of them began wandering the countryside aimlessly for the next few hours. George was still giving Dream the cold shoulder and the masked man was still acting incredibly distracted, leaving Sapnap stuck in the middle of the worst roadtrip of his life. He was tempted to start annoying both of them just to get some kind of conversation going, but he was afraid that would completely backfire and make the atmosphere even worse. More and more hours passed and they didn't find anything, which only served to make Sapnap more antsy.

Sapnap finally just came to a stop. "Okay this isn't working. It's been so long and we haven't seen *any* lava."

Both George and Dream kept walking, too caught up in their own thoughts to even notice that Sapnap said anything. Annoyed, Sapnap flicked a bit of his flame forward and created a wall of fire in front of his boyfriends. George noticed immediately and windmilled backwards, but Dream kept moving forward, almost stepping into the flames before George grabbed him by the shoulder and pulled him back. "Are you guys done yet?" Sapnap snapped at them.

"What?" Dream asked.

"What? *What?* You two have been stuck in your heads all day and I seem to be the only one even looking for a lava pool, but you have the nerve to ask *me* what?" Sapnap could have strangled him. "You are really pissing me off."

Both Dream and George were silent, looking at their feet like scolded children, but that didn't make Sapnap feel any better. It just pissed him off even more. Unfortunately, blowing up at them wouldn't solve anything, no matter how satisfying it sounded, so he took a deep breath and centered himself before speaking again. "It's been hours and we haven't seen any lava. If we keep going like this, it's going to take forever, so either we come up with a new strategy, or just like, go home."

George looked at Sapnap blankly. "You don't even have a home."

"*Ouch* . Way to rub it in." Sapnap made a dramatic show of flinching at his words.

"Shut *up* ." George rolled his eyes in response.

Sapnap was glad that George was able to joke around, at least a little bit. It was starting to get too stuffy for Sapnap's liking. Now he just had to figure out how to get Dream's head out of the clouds, but he was afraid that might not be possible until they opened the end portal.

"So what's our new plan?" Sapnap asked.

George raised a single eyebrow, "Why do *we* have to come up with a plan? You're the one that said we needed a new one."

"Because I'm too pretty to do that much thinking."

"We could start looking underground?" Dream suggested before George could respond with his own quip, making the older man clam up again. Sapnap wanted to tear his hair out. They were acting like *children* and he literally didn't know what to do about it. George was just too good at holding a grudge and Dream was too preoccupied to even care. Their relationship was built entirely on trust and communication and after the night before, Sapnap thought that the three of

them were as solid as they have ever been, but now, less than a day later, it felt like the relationship was slipping out of his grasp. Was it really always this fragile? Sapnap was used to fitting himself between Dream and George's squabbles, doing his best to smooth things over, but now he was completely failing at his job.

He shook himself from his thoughts. They just needed to get Dream to the end portal and everything would go back to normal. "Sure. Underground works. Finding a cave will probably be easier than a lava pool."

They set off again and somehow the silence was even more oppressive than before. It made Sapnap walk a little faster, hoping that getting ahead of his boyfriends would make it more bearable, but it just made the trek feel lonelier.

Finding a cave was much easier than finding a lava pool. They came across the mouth of a cavern less than an hour after deciding to change plans and Sapnap couldn't have been more relieved. He brought his flame to life in the palm of his hand and spared a glance at his boyfriends to make sure they were following before heading in.

The cave was filled with so many twists and turns and dead ends and the entire time Sapnap was afraid of having to put out his fire in order to hide from mobs. He wished he had remembered his fear of the dark before agreeing to spelunking, but he had just been so desperate for any sort of progress that he had completely forgotten. Luckily there hadn't been any signs of mobs and Sapnap was able to keep his flame as bright as he could manage. The maze-like layout of the cave system was incredibly annoying and after the fifth time they had to double back, Sapnap turned to George, who was too busy glaring at Dream to notice how many dead ends they had run into. "George." Sapnap did his best to keep from snapping at his boyfriend, but he definitely wasn't able to keep all of the annoyance out of his voice.

George startled and looked back at him, "Yeah?"

"Which way?"

"Huh?"

Sapnap sighed before rephrasing his question, "Which way should we go?" He was hoping that if he could catch George off guard and get him to answer without thinking about it, his clairvoyance would make the decision for him.

"Uh, that way." George pointed to a small tunnel to the right. He sounded unsure of himself, but Sapnap didn't have any better ideas, so he followed it without question.

It turned out to be correct, because after a few minutes, Sapnap could see light coming from the end of the tunnel, and eventually the walls widened to reveal a lava lake that, due to the size and shape of the cavern, appeared to stretch out into an abyss of inky black darkness. Sapnap extinguished the flame in his hand, no longer needing it now that he had a large light source in front of him, and whistled, impressed by the size of the lake. It even seemed to be enough to distract George and Dream as they glanced around.

"Now what?" George asked.

"Now we make a portal." Dream said like it was obvious.

"How?"

Sapnap shrugged, "Well it just takes water and lava to make obsidian, right? So I can just shape

the lava for the portal and then one of you can pour the wa- Son of a *bitch* . How are we gonna get water here?”

“We’ll just use our waterskins.” George replied without missing a beat. It made Sapnap feel a little foolish for not thinking of that sooner, but at least they had a plan.

Sapnap turned towards the lava, debating how he was going to go about handling it, before biting the bullet and just sticking his whole hand into the lake. George sucked in a sharp breath and Dream’s eyes widened to the size of dinner plates, obviously not expecting Sapnap to be so bold. Sapnap, on the other hand, was resisting the urge to scream in agony. He pulled his hand from the lava as casually as he could manage. Other than looking a little red, it was fine, not even singed, but that didn’t change the fact that the heat of the lava hurt more than anything Sapnap had ever felt in his life. That didn’t change anything, for Sapnap, he was still going to make the nether portal.

He held up his hand so George and Dream could see it, “See? Not a scratch! We’ll get this portal made in no time.” His boyfriends appeared wary, but they took Sapnap’s word for it.

They must have been really and truly distracted, because only the day before, the two of them would have been able to tell Sapnap was lying through his teeth from a mile away. It made Sapnap’s chest *ache* , and maybe, that hurt more than the lava did.

It was slow work, scooping lava into place while George and Dream poured water onto it until it solidified into obsidian, and each second stretched into years as Sapnap struggled to grin and bear through the pain so his boyfriends wouldn’t notice that even a pyromancer wasn’t really meant to handle lava. He couldn’t tell how much time actually passed, but when the nether portal was finally completed, Sapnap could have cried in relief.

“So how do we make it-” George made some indecipherable gestures with his hands, “You know?”

Dream pulled out the journal and scanned the pages again, Sapnap didn’t know why, he was sure that Dream had memorized the thing cover to cover by that point. “Well it says to use a flint and steel to light it so I’m assuming we just need to start a fire, but obsidian isn’t flama-”

Impatient, Sapnap snapped, sending his flame zipping forward and showering the portal frame in sparks. There was an odd sound that Sapnap could only describe as *swirling* before their faces were lit in an eerie purple light as the portal came to life.

“ *Whoa* .” All three of them said at the same time.

They stared at the portal, awestruck by the swirling colors, and then as one, they all scrambled forward into the portal, none of them wanting to be the last to see the dimension beyond.

## Chapter End Notes

Okay, so after seeing how long it's taken me to write this one chapter that's less than 4k words, I decided to get rid of any chapters that don't have anything to do with the plot and consolidate the remaining chapters. SO, this means there will only be 24 chapters. I just don't really watch dream smp content anymore and I'm not as motivated to work on this fic, but I REFUSE to leave it unfinished. My compromise is making it



shorter lmao.

# All The Way Down

## Chapter Summary

The Nether kind of sucks in George's opinion. *Really* sucks.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George knew that he didn't see color the same way as most people. More things looked the same to him than there should be, making the world seem pretty monochromatic where others described an absolute array of color. George did not think he was the only one seeing only one color once they entered the nether. Both Sapnap and Dream spun in slow circles, gawking at the new and strange surroundings, and George was tempted to enjoy them. It really was just like a fairytale, a whole realm of fire that seemed to endlessly stretch across plateaus of burning rock and giant lakes of lava.

It was also incredibly fucking hot.

"Listen," Sapnap was the first to speak, "I know it's something pretty much only pyromancer hunters are supposed to believe, but this place is fucking *awful* ." He wipes sweat from his forehead as he speaks, and George was inclined to agree. They had only been in the nether for a handful of seconds and already his clothing was sticking to his skin uncomfortably and he could feel sweat rolling down the sides of his face and back of his neck.

Dream looked over his shoulder at his boyfriends, "Let's just hurry and get the blaze rods and get out of here, the sooner the better."

George was also inclined to agree with Dream, but he was still angry at the masked man for attacking Sapnap. Even if he didn't mean it, Dream was much stronger and faster than both George and Sapnap, and if something like that happened again, where Dream acted thoughtlessly, it could easily end in something worse than a bruised wrist. Sure, Dream apologized, but that was all. George felt like he couldn't trust Dream, not while he was so focused on the task ahead of him, and with their relationship being built largely on trust, that was scarier than he was willing to admit out loud. He needed to be sure that Dream wouldn't do it again, but the masked man was too distracted to even notice George's ire.

"Alright George, which way should we go?" Sapnap asked, shaking George from his thoughts.

He thought about it for a second before shrugging, making Dream scoff. "Excuse me?" George asked with thinly veiled anger in response to his boyfriend's attitude.

"You're clairvoyant! You should be able to tell which way we need to go!" The masked man snapped in response.

"You know I can't just turn my magic on and off just like that! Either it's there or it's not and I have no control over when I can use it!"

Sapnap stepped between the two of them before George could say anything else. "Guys, chill

out, let's just start walking and maybe George's clairvoy-"

"If you can't use your magic, then what good are you?" Dream interrupted. He seemed taller than normal, towering over Sapnap, and George could see Dream's eyes glaring through the holes in his mask. Sapnap once told George that Dream's eyes were the greenest things he had ever seen and even though George couldn't tell the difference between green and yellow, he could believe it with how his eyes seemed to glow unnaturally.

His eyes made his words take several seconds to sink in. Sapnap sucked in a sharp breath loud enough to be heard over the constant crackling of fire around them and George could only silently wish that the ground would open up and swallow him whole if only to make the pain go away. "You don't mean that." Sapnap said. His tone, which would normally be confident and loud, was unsure and scared. "Please say you don't mean it."

Hearing Sapnap sound that way made something in George snap. The rage that overcame him in that instant was all-consuming and stronger than anything George had ever felt before. "You're a real piece of shit, you know?" He was aware that his words were completely out of character, but not even Sapnap looking at him with pleading eyes could stop George from pushing the pyromancer aside to get into Dream's face. "All you ever cared about was getting to the end, didn't you? Is that it? You've just been pretending to care so we'll follow along with all your stupid plans? Admit it! You've been using us from the start!" George wasn't actually sure if he believed his words, but the longer Dream wasn't acting like himself, the louder the voice in the back of his mind seemed to get.

"Guys!" Sapnap's voice cracked with emotion, "Please stop!"

George forced himself to ignore him. He wanted answers. He wanted Dream to *hurt* as much as he did. He wanted to go home back to his little fishing village and pretend he had never wasted five years of his life following a man that would lie and cheat and steal without ever sharing his reasoning. It had been five years and George still felt like he didn't know a single thing about him, and he had been okay with that, but not now, not if Dream was going to act like this was more important than their relationship.

The sound of a screeching child interrupted them, and then, without warning, George was thrown backwards from the force of an explosion into a wall of netherrack several feet behind him.

It took him several disorientated seconds to get back to his feet, and when he was finally able to look back where the three of them had been standing, all George could see was a crater. "Sapnap! Dream!" George screamed, neither of his boyfriends were in sight and it had his pulse racing with fear. He looked around, trying to find whatever could have caused the source of the explosion, but he couldn't see anything.

There was another screech and then a ball of fire went streaking across George's field of vision. He followed it with his eyes to see it go hurling at Dream who danced neatly out of the way, easily dodging the explosion now that he was expecting it. Seeing one of his boyfriends lessened his anxiety, but until George saw Sapnap alive and well, he wouldn't be able to rest even for a second.

George peered around the corner of the alcove to see where the fireball came from, and what he saw shocked him. It looked like a stark white giant squid gently floating through the air and George would have enjoyed just watching it's graceful movements if it didn't screech for a third time and spit another fireball at his masked boyfriend. They needed to kill it if they were going to look for wherever Sapnap was thrown in the blast, it was too dangerous to just wander out in the open with that creature flying around. He spared another glance at Dream who met George's eyes and then dramatically imitated firing a bow. George's eyes widened, he had forgotten that he had

their only bow and arrows in his pack and began immediately digging around in his things to pull them out. He strung the bow with practiced ease and notched an arrow before peaking around the corner again. Even though Dream had much better eyesight than George, he was still a better shot than the masked man, and George was easily able to shoot the flying creature directly between its eyes. It barely had a second to falter before George had fired two more arrows and sent its body into the lava lake below.

As soon as the creature started falling, George dropped the bow and rushed towards the crater. What he found was a giant hole that revealed a giant ravine below. The ground they had been standing on was only a thin ledge and not the solid ground it appeared to be. "Sapnap?" George called, looking around desperately, but the pyromancer was nowhere to be seen, which could only mean one thing, he had fallen through the hole.

Looking down at the ravine, it only took George a few seconds to spot his pyromancer boyfriend, and he didn't look good. Even from where George was, almost a hundred meters above, he could see the awkward way Sapnap was holding his arm and the blood streaming down the side of his face, but, miraculously, he was alive and on his feet. However, that might not last much longer as Sapnap was running deeper into the ravine at full speed with a group of piglins right on his tail chasing him with crossbows and gold swords.

"*Fuck* ." Dream swore under his breath, much closer to George than he expected, making him jump. "We need to get down there."

George desperately wanted to make a snarky remark in response to Dream's sudden change of heart, but it wasn't the time, not with Sapnap so clearly in danger. "How? There's no way we can climb down fast enough without any gear."

"I can." Dream replied confidently, "But then I would be leaving you up here." George would have scoffed at him under different circumstances, he was perfectly capable of taking care of himself, but in a place as dangerous as the nether, it wasn't wise to be on his own.

He looked over at Dream who seemed to be debating something with himself. "Well? Any ideas?"

Even though the mask covered Dream's face, George could still see the muscles of his jaw tightening as he clenched his teeth. "Yes, but--"

"Then what's the hold up? We don't have time for this!"

Dream hesitated, "Do you trust me?"

Now that was a loaded question. Yesterday George's answer would have been yes, without hesitation, but now, George wasn't able to get a read on his masked boyfriend for a while now, and they had just been fighting to the point that he wasn't even sure if they actually *were* boyfriends anymore. But Dream suddenly changed the moment Sapnap was in trouble, he was acting like himself again, and despite everything, George trusted *this* Dream. This Dream that was unequivocally the man he fell in love with, and the one he trusted more than anything.

"Yes." George breathed out, and before he had even finished speaking, Dream scooped him up in his arms in a bridal carry and leaped into the hole. Now George may have trusted Dream, but that didn't change the fact that a one hundred meter free fall, even in the arms of his superpowered inhuman boyfriend, was *terrifying* . George screamed at the top of his lungs the whole way down.

As soon as they landed, they were already on their feet and running in the direction that Sapnap

disappeared. They ran long enough that George's insides began to feel like they were eating themselves from the anxiety. How far could Sapnap actually have gone?

Quite far as it turns out. George barely has time to take stock of the situation before Dream is leaping past him into the fray. Sapnap had managed to climb up onto a ledge that the piglins could only traverse one by one, saving himself from being ambushed by multiple mobs at once, but no matter how much fire he threw at them, the piglins seemed unaffected. Their armor was enchanted, George noticed, and it was a rare sight, enchantments were extremely rare in general, but every single piglin seemed to have an enchanted chestplate that made Sapnap's flames ineffective.

Dream disemboweled three piglins before George even had the chance to catch up with his own sword in hand. George wasn't nearly as skilled as Dream, and as much as he hated to admit it, Sapnap was also better than him, but not by much. Still, properly motivated from seeing his boyfriend unarmed and in danger, George felt more dangerous than he had in a long time.

He dodged two piglins attacks as soon as they noticed him and slit each of their throats without looking. It was as if he knew where he needed to strike long before he could see an opening with his own eyes and George belatedly realized that it was his magic flowing through him, much stronger than it ever had in the past.

Dream and George ended up back to back, surrounded by piglins. They were no longer focusing on Sapnap which gave the pyromancer a chance to slip away and find his own sword, wherever he had ended up dropping it in the commotion.

By the time Sapnap returned, all the piglins were dead. "You guys couldn't even save me one?" He asked sarcastically. George felt the tension release from his shoulders. If Sapnap was cracking jokes, that meant he was at least somewhat okay, and in the hellscape of the nether, George would readily accept somewhat okay anyday over the alternative.

"Where's your sword Sap? You should have been able to win that fight easily, those piglins weren't that strong." Dream asked.

If George had so much as blinked, he would have missed the way Sapnap winced, almost imperceptibly before slapping on a wide grin and shoving his hands into his pockets. "I totally forgot about it dude! I'm so used to fighting with fire, you know?"

Dream rolled his eyes and laughed, seeming to accept the answer, but George wasn't buying it for a second. He marched over to Sapnap and grabbed his wrist, pulling it out to take a look at what the pyromancer was trying to hide. What he found made George want to be violently ill. "Sapnap." He whispered, unable to keep the horror from his voice, "How did this happen?"

Sapnap's hands looked less like they were covered in skin and more like a child's failed sculpting project. The hand was blackened and every square centimeter was *covered* in the worst blisters George had ever seen in his life.

"I uh- Well-" He squirmed under George's intense gaze and tried to pull his hand back, but George kept his wrist in an iron grip. "I'm immune to fire, but not uh, not heat."

*The lava*, George realized nauseously. He had been so focused on being upset with Dream while they had been building the nether portal that he didn't even notice that Sapnap had been hurting himself badly enough that he couldn't even hold a sword. From the way Dream stood beside him, shoulders tense and hands cupped around Sapnap's without quite touching them, the masked man had also been too distracted to notice.

“*I’m sorry .*” George said, the guilt heavy on his tongue. How could he not notice? How could he get so caught up in Dream’s mistakes that he had forgotten their relationship was made of three and not two?

Sapnap shook his head, “Not your fault, it was my choice.”

“That doesn’t mean you should have to have made it!” George was angry, but he didn’t know where to put all the rage that was building inside him. Sapnap didn’t deserve it, not after he had spent so long shouldering the responsibility of their relationship when he and Dream both failed to do their part. “Don’t you see? You shouldn’t have to hurt for us. I don’t *want* you to hurt for us.”

The pyromancer laughed bitterly, “Well someone has to.”

“Close your eyes.” Dream said it in a tone that even with as mad as George had been with him, his eyes fluttered closed on their own. Something was shoved into his hands and with a start, George realized it was Dream’s mask. He turned, facing away from his boyfriends so he could open his eyes and stare at the childlike smile carved into it. Dream had just given him the only object he valued over his own life, something so valuable to Dream that George had never been sure if he and Sapnap actually meant more to him than the mask. In his hands was proof that Dream trusted him with his entire being, even if he hadn’t been acting like himself.

It was the worst apology that George had ever received, but he took it and stored it deep inside his heart anyways.

A gloved hand gently grabbed hold of George’s wrist and he instinctively let his eyes flutter closed as Dream pulled George close. He cupped George’s face with both hands and kissed him with such slow heat it had his brain short circuiting. He barely had the brain power to remember to hold onto Dream’s mask until his boyfriend took it from him and pulled away.

“You can open your eyes now.”

George didn’t hesitate to look. Dream’s mask was already back in place, like nothing had happened, but George could see Sapnap’s swollen lips and the dazed look on his face. It was proof that it had been real.

“I’m sorry that I’ve been such an asshole.” Dream admitted quietly. “I’m just-” He cut himself off with a strangled noise.

“What Dream? You’re just what?” Sapnap’s voice was surprisingly gentle and eyes serious.

“*Scared . I’m scared .*”

And wasn’t that just a punch to the gut? Dream, a man who never feared anything, who never *admitted* to anything easily, was telling them his biggest secret like a kid who knew there were monsters in the world far worse than the ones under the bed.

He was looking at his own feet, like he was scared to look them in the eye, and George couldn’t have that. He grabbed Dream by the chin, forcing the masked man to look at him. “We are going to finish whatever the hell we need to do in here and then, once we’re out of here, you are going to tell us *everything* . No more secrets, no more avoiding questions, *everything* .” Dream swallowed nervously, but George didn’t let go, didn’t even blink until the masked man nodded in agreement.

“Okay.” George breathed, “Now that that’s settled, let me bandage your hands Sapnap.”

Sapnap, thankfully, obliged without arguing. They couldn’t use water in the nether, it was too hot

and would only make Sapnap's blisters worse, but George had Aloe in his bag that he carefully smoothed over the pyromancer's hands after cleaning them, pausing whenever Sapnap winced, then he loosely wrapped his hands in bandages. When they left the nether, George would make him remove the bandages and keep his hands in cold running water, but for now he just wanted to make sure that they wouldn't get infected if he accidentally popped the blisters while traversing the nether. Dream watched George work in silence, his eyes never straying from his and Sapnap's hands. It felt ritualistic to George, like an apology to Sapnap for his neglect. It wasn't a very good apology, but it was all they had time for.

Eventually, George finished. The three of them stepped away from each other, orbiting each other, not quite coming to terms with what their relationship had to look like until they were safe enough to actually hash it out. George knew that they would pretend everything was fine for now. Dream would explain what was bothering him and they would continue to pretend everything was fine until Dream completed whatever it was he had set out to do from the beginning.

George pushed down every negative emotion, every bit of rage, into a tiny box in his heart and locked it. He would come back to it when he had time, until then, he loved Dream, he loved Sapnap, and they both loved him back. That would be enough to get them through this, until it was safe enough to be angry again, upset, to cry. It was enough.

Silently, the three of them began to explore, looking for a way out of the ravine so they could continue to look for a fortress. Several minutes passed until George heard Sapnap calling for them, "Hey guys! Check this out!" Both George and Dream hurried over to where Sapnap stood in a small tunnel. "You'll never believe what I just found." The pyromancer's grin was sly.

"What Sapnap?" George asked, his tone annoyed.

"Come on!" Sapnap turned and jogged down the tunnel, "Look!"

When they reached the other side, George gasped. It couldn't be that easy, right? There, less than fifty meters away, was a fortress.

"Who's the clairvoyant one now, huh?" Sapnap lightly shoulder checked George and then sprinted towards the giant structure.

"Hey wait!" George yelled, chasing after him. He heard Dream laugh and then the masked man went flying past him, "You're such an asshole!" He wasn't sure which boyfriend he was saying it to, but they both laughed anyway.

When they reached the closest pillar, George looked up and was shocked by how *tall* it actually was. "How are we going to get up there?" Sapnap asked, voicing George's thoughts perfectly.

"Do we still have rope?" Dream asked. Luckily, the answer was yes, and a few minutes later, the masked man was scaling the wall, digging his fingers and toes into any crevices he could find between the bricks. It always amazed George how *skilled* Dream was at climbing, in fact George was pretty sure Dream could figure out how to climb a completely smooth wall if he was given some time.

George and Sapnap watched Dream grow smaller and smaller until he disappeared over the ledge when he reached the top. A few seconds later, one end of the rope hit the ground beside them. George carefully tied a loop into the end of the rope for he and Sapnap to stand on and then he wrapped his arms around the pyromancer so he wouldn't have to grab the rope with his injured hands while Dream pulled them up.

It was impressive how fast Dream managed to haul them up to the top, even faster than he had climbed the distance. It was a testament to his inhuman strength and, like always, it made George wonder just how strong Dream actually was. Has he ever reached his limit? George didn't know, but he didn't have too much time to think about it.

George found the blaze spawner almost immediately afterwards. "Damn George, you're on fire!" Sapnap joked. The pyromancer humor made him want to groan, but he appreciated the fact that his use of magic was being praised. It was a little funny though, that he actually had some control over it for the moment after what Dream had said earlier, like his power was fueled by spite. As soon as that thought came, George pushed it away, he promised himself to forget it happened until later, and that's what he was going to do.

Dream walked up to the spawner, trying to figure out how it worked, when a blaze materialized next to him. "Holy shit!" The masked man shouted in surprise. Sapnap leaped in front of Dream, deftly catching the fire it spat at the masked man with one hand. George was about to scold him, but a jolt of anxiety suddenly ran through him.

"Look out!" He shouted just in time for Sapnap and Dream to react to a second blaze materializing in front of the first. Sapnap caught more fireballs and then Dream sprang around him and sliced through one of the blazes with his sword. It sizzled, moaned, and then collapsed into a pile of fiery dust and rods. Sapnap shoved Dream out of the way when the other blaze spat fire again and Dream reflexively slashed through that one too.

The three of them were able to make quick work of the blazes, George warning them when they were about to materialize and gathering any undamaged rods he could find in the piles of their remains, Sapnap catching their fiery attacks as he protected both Dream and George, and Dream cutting down each blaze almost as soon as it spawned. George was reminded of how well the three of them worked together, complemented each other, and almost caught a fireball to the face when he got lost in the thought of wondering how *long* it had been since he had felt such synergy between the three of them. Maybe the tension that erupted between them had been building for much longer than he thought and now that they agreed to put it aside for now, they were able to work together like they used to.

"Watch out George!" Sapnap snapped, worry in his voice as he barely managed to save George from being lit on fire.

"Don't tell me what to do." Was his automatic response, the banter coming from him instinctively.

"A thank you would be *nice* " Sapnap replied and George laughed.

They quickly gathered enough blaze rods and then retreated around a corner. "You know, that was actually kind of fun." Dream admitted, which shocked George. It wasn't often that Dream talked about his feelings or what he found enjoyable, especially not lately. Guess he wasn't the only one feeling the temporary breath of fresh air in their relationship before it inevitably went to shit. And wasn't that a thought? That their relationship might end once they were done helping Dream with his quest because they decided to bottle everything up for both their own safety and each other's. They couldn't be distracted, that would just be asking for trouble, and for them, trouble usually meant facing death.

"I don't know Dream, most people don't find being shot at with fireballs fun." Sapnap replied, deadpan, but George could tell that he had been having fun as well.

"Oh my god, let's just go before I sweat to death." George whined and gave both his boyfriends a light shove back towards where they climbed into the fortress.



Getting down was significantly easier than it had been climbing up. Dream lowered George down with the rope and then scooped Sapnap up in his arms and leaped down much like he had jumped into the ravine earlier with George. The only difference was that Sapnap seemed to enjoy the experience, much more cavalier about experiencing Dream's inhuman abilities than George was.

As they were passing through the ravine, Dream stopped and began stripping the piglins of their armor. "What are you doing?" George asked.

"The journal says that piglins won't attack people wearing gold and that they'll trade things we need in exchange for gold. Trading will save me from having to do something," He paused and George was pretty sure he was making a sour face behind his mask, "*unpleasant*."

"Okay then let's put on the armor." George said, moving to help.

Dream stopped him. "No, I need all the gold I can get to trade with them. Ender pearls aren't exactly a cheap commodity."

"So you expect us to just let you go hang out with a bunch of mobs that tried to kill me?" Sapnap asked.

"No." Dream replied, "I'm just asking you to trust me."

It was a true test of how well the three of them were going to put aside their grievances for the sake of their goal, a goal that George wasn't even entirely clear on, but a goal nonetheless. He wasn't going to let it trip them up. "Okay." George said before Sapnap could say anything, "but we're not leaving the nether without you."

Dream stared at George unflinchingly for several seconds before nodding. "Okay."

"Okay." George echoed.

George helped Dream strip the rest of the piglins of their gold while Sapnap stood watch, then Dream gathered up all the gold and disappeared deeper into the ravine. Sapnap and George didn't speak the entire time Dream was gone, just sat in a small alcove where mobs wouldn't be able to spot them. Despite having a lot of room in their hiding spot, the two of them sat pressed together, from their shoulders all the way down to their knees. It was a comfort that George held onto greedily, knowing at least one of his boyfriends was safe.

Dream comes back, gold gone, now possessing a bag full of ender pearls. He shows them off to George and Sapnap silently and then leads the way back to where they entered the ravine. Climbing out of the ravine went the same as when they entered the fortress, Dream scaling the wall first and then throwing a rope down, and then George helping Sapnap stay balanced as the masked man pulled the two of them up.

It hadn't been long since they entered the nether, but after all the emotional turmoil, George could have sworn they had been there for weeks. For some reason, George dreaded what they would face on the other side, even if it was just their home world. Maybe Sapnap and Dream felt it too because the three of them stood in front of the portal, staring at it for a few long moments, not moving.

George was finally the one to interrupt the silence. "Shall we go?" He asked.

Both Sapnap and Dream startled as if they had just snapped out of a daze. "Yeah." Sapnap said, clearing his throat, "Let's go."

Leaving the nether felt like much less of a victory than entering it had, but as the hellish dimension faded from view, George was happy to see it go.

## Chapter End Notes

Idk if ya'll can tell, but the epilogue is going to be \*emotional\*. Happy endings though, I promise.

# Revelations

## Chapter Summary

Dream finally explains everything.

## Chapter Notes

Short chapter!!!! Mostly just world building and explanations. The next chapter is going to be the conclusion and then chapter 24 will be the epilogue.

“Do you remember Bolson? When I got really sick?” Dream asked. It had been hours since they left the warmth of Technoblade’s house and they had managed to cover a long distance in Sapnap and George’s rush to be as far from those memories as they could manage. There was hardly any snow still sticking to the ground anymore and Dream could no longer see his own breath, but the creeping chill at having so much of his boyfriends’ hearts involuntarily revealed had him in a sharing mood. Dream still owed them an explanation anyways, he’d promised while they were in the nether, but the excitement of making eyes of ender and watching the glittering orbs glide through the air overwhelmed them, and Dream’s promise had been forgotten.

Not anymore.

Sapnap and George both stiffened and looked over their shoulders at Dream. They must have seen something that Dream wasn’t aware of because they both came to a stop, “Let’s set up camp for the night.” Sapnap suggested lightly.

They worked in silence, their bedrolls spread out and a fire started in record timing. At first the three of them sat around the fire, spread out, but the second Dream opened his mouth to speak, Sapnap was on his feet and then squeezing next to Dream on his bedroll. A few seconds later, George was pressed against Dream’s other side.

“You’re not going to get sick again, are you?” Sapnap asked. Dream sort of hated how he always knew the right questions to ask.

“If I don’t-” He didn’t know how to phrase it. Their relationship had been teetering on a precipice for a while and if the three of them couldn’t find balance, it was a long way down in all directions. Adding more to their pile of problems was only going to make it harder, but George had been right, George was always right, he couldn’t hide things from them forever. “If I don’t find a cure then I will.”

“You never got better, did you?”

Dream let out a choked laugh at George’s question. He still remembered then, remembered their conversation so long ago where he tried so hard to get answers from Dream. George was always looking for answers. “No, I didn’t.”

Sapnap made a hurt noise in the back of his throat, but George just looked resigned. He knew, of course he had known. The three of them had known each other for almost six years now and in that time George had somehow picked up on a lot more than he had let on.

“It’s some kind of parasite,” Dream admitted, “I don’t know why I suddenly got worse in Bolson, but I know that if it happens again I won’t survive it. I shouldn’t have survived it then, I should have turned into-”

“An enderman?” Dream sucked in a breath, it had been a logical conclusion, the *right* one anyways, but hearing it out loud made him feel like all the air had been pulled from his lungs.

He nodded for a moment before finding his voice, “Yeah.”

“Then how do we cure it?” Sapnap turned to face Dream more fully, but to do so he had to pull away, and Dream found himself missing the comfort of having the pyromancer glued to his side.

It was Dream’s biggest secret. Who he was, where he came from, none of that mattered. Not really. It all paled in comparison to what was bubbling up inside him, the absolute *terror* of having his boyfriends know the truth, that Dream had just been dragging them around on a wild goose chase, that it very well might be too late for Dream to be saved.

“I don’t know.”

His voice cracked when he said it. Dream couldn’t be sure, but he thinks this might be what emotions feel like to humans. All consuming. Unstoppable. He doesn’t *know* how to save his own life, his plan is idiotic at best, and could possibly kill him instantly at worst, but he has to try something, *anything*, to get just a little more time with his boyfriends.

He’s been fucking that up though. Pushing them away, self-destructing, tearing apart their relationship on the off chance that his crackpot theory might actually give him more time instead of using the time he knows he has.

“I’m *sorry* I just- I don’t know and-” Dream’s lip begins to tremble as he speaks and it’s just too much because he doesn’t want his boyfriends to know. He doesn’t want them to be hurt like this. “-and I’m just trying the only thing I could think of, but what if I’m wrong and it just-”

“Shh, Dream.” George is sitting in his lap then, straddling his waist and gently cupping his face with both hands. His hands are shaking. George’s hands are shaking and Dream knows he’s the reason and it only makes him feel worse. He didn’t want to tell them.

He had to tell them.

“*Dream*, you’re hyperventilating baby. Come back to me.” Was he? “Open your eyes Dream.” When had he closed them?

Dream opened his eyes and met George’s gaze. His face entirely filled his vision, their foreheads pressed together, only separated by Dream’s mask, as George talked him through calming his breathing in a whisper. As Dream got a better grasp on his surroundings, he could feel his own death grip on George’s thighs, Sapnap’s body draped across his back, and how both of his boyfriends were breathing slow and in sync until Dream was breathing to the same rhythm.

“I’m sorry.” He whispered finally.

Sapnap gave him a tight squeeze around his waist and dug his chin into Dream’s shoulder. “Don’t be. It’s not your fault.”

“I should have told you sooner. From the beginning even. I knew the whole time and-”

“And maybe you have.” Sapnap interrupted, “But you didn’t. You told us now and that means we’re going to deal with it now.”

“There’s no use in thinking about what would be happening if you did things differently. We’re already here. We already made it this far.” George agreed. He pulled away from Dream’s face finally, but made no move to get off his lap, only prying Dream’s hands from his thighs and lacing their fingers together. “Tell us about the parasite.”

Dream stared at where his hands were linked with George’s, flexed his fingers, and took a deep breath. “I grew up in the End. It’s a dimension with no sun, only stars, and void for as far as the eye can see in any direction. The whole dimension was protected by, I suppose humans would call it a god, we worshipped her, but it’s different. She isn’t divine.

“We called her the Ender Dragon. She had her own island far from the End cities that was where the portal to other dimensions was. Something happened though, she changed, one day everything was normal, and the next her white scales turned black and she attacked the closest End city.

“I remember feeling it when she killed the first one of us. It was like a hole being ripped into my chest. Now I know it was the parasite spreading, by latching onto one of us, it was able to dig its hooks into all of us. It started turning everyone into something else, something *feral*. Those of us that turned slower were attacked and torn apart by the enderman. They used to be our friends, our *family*, but now they were tearing people to shreds.

“My mom turned before me and my dad. She attacked us and my dad barely got us out of there safely. There were so many of them, they were shrieking and teleporting all over the place as they chased us, but the End is made of floating islands and eventually we ran out of places to run.”

George let go of one of Dream’s hands and gently tilted his chin up so he could look into his eyes. “I’m sorry. I’m *so* sorry for pushing you all this time, especially when you’ve been dealing with this kind of hurt for so long.”

Dream shook his head, “S’not your fault. You didn’t know.”

“Doesn’t mean you don’t deserve an apology.” Sapnap mumbled into Dream’s shoulder. His arms were still wrapped tight around his masked boyfriend and Dream was thankful for how his touch anchored him.

“How did you get away?” George asked.

“My dad he-” Dream swallowed, he felt like there was something lodged in the back of his throat, “he threw me over the edge and into the void. I think he thought it would be better than being torn apart, that it would hurt less. I didn’t die though. I woke up in a swamp in the overworld and I’ve been trying to figure out how to stop the parasite from turning me into an enderman ever since.”

Both George and Sapnap twitched, almost imperceptibly.

“What?” He asked them.

George looked over Dream’s shoulder at Sapnap. The two of them seemed to have a silent conversation with only their eyes for several seconds before George turned to face him again.

“How far along is it? We saw it in Bolson but-” He squeezed Dream’s hands in his own “-it got worse, didn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Dream rasped, “Yeah it did.”

He moved then, making George get off his lap and Sapnap let go of his waist, and pulled off his shirt, showing his boyfriends the progress of the parasite as it devoured his skin, turning it into the otherness that made up enderman. When they left Bolson, a year ago, the markings on his chest looked like roots stretching across his torso, but now his entire body looked like the night sky. Only Dream’s neck and face remained uncovered.

“How did we not notice?” Sapnap whispered in a horrified voice.

“Because I didn’t want you to.”

Sapnap threw his arms around Dream, “I love you. I don’t care what happens, I just want you to know that.” The pyromancer’s voice was insistent, even in its hushed tone.

“Why are we going to the End?” George’s question was so unexpected that even Sapnap paused. “You said you were trying the only thing you could think of to cure it. What is it?”

“When I first got to the overworld, the parasite’s spread was so slow. I didn’t even notice it was progressing until I had been here for years, so I thought I had plenty of time to figure it out. If not, I would still live as long as most humans do, which was fine with me. But when we went to Bolson, when I fell asleep, I think the Ender Dragon found me, because ever since then it’s been spreading too fast. I think that the parasite isn’t fully attached to me, and that if I kill its source, it’ll die and I’ll be cured.”

At least, that was what Dream hoped. With the speed that the parasite was consuming him, Dream knew he had very little time left, maybe weeks at the most. Not enough time to properly apologize for how he’s been acting and *especially* not enough time to make up for it. But he didn’t care about apologizing in the grand scheme of things, he wanted to grow old together with Sapnap and George, to see them throughout the rest of their lives, to watch how the people he knows now grow into the people they will be in the future. He wants to be a part of that growth, to have a part of him so intertwined with their identities just as they are to him.

It’s selfish. He wants them selfishly with every atom in his being and yet he is being confined to only a few more weeks of their lives. He wants more. He’s insatiable, hungry only for time spent in their company, his fingers laced with theirs, he wants to devour the space between the three of them until there is nothing left but the three of them in the whole universe.

He loves them and he’s willing to try the impossible for just another second of their time.

“The Ender Dragon,” George realized, a bit later than Dream expected for how sharp he had been throughout their conversation, “You’re planning to kill the Ender Dragon.”

And wouldn’t that be a miracle?

# Fin

## Chapter Summary

\*final boss music\*

## Chapter Notes

sup bitches it's been three days, but momma doesn't stop their grind for no one  
:sunglasses:

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Finding the stronghold had been easy, the eyes of Ender leading them directly there, and the structure had even been exposed to the surface just offshore along the coast. It saved them the trouble of having to figure out another cave system in order to reach it.

George and Dream had already waded out into the water, waist deep. They didn't have boats, but the stronghold was only thirty meters out and the water was shallow enough that they would easily be able to swim down to it. Dream, who didn't need air as often as humans, could spend time swimming around and looking for an entrance while George and Sapnap waited at the surface.

There was one teensy weensy problem with their plan. One that became abundantly clear when George turned to make a sarcastic comment to Sapnap about how Dream waded through water like a horse to find the pyromancer had stopped several meters back, only up to his ankles in the ocean spray. His face was pale and expression apprehensive and George's heart sunk to his stomach when he remembered. "Dream." He said, getting the attention of his masked boyfriend, "Sapnap can't swim."

Sapnap squawked out a noise of protest, "I can swim perfectly fine asshole, I just don't want to get-"

"*Sapnap* ." Dream interrupted him before he could continue, "Don't lie to us."

The pyromancer looked sheepish then, "Sorry," He mumbled, "How did you know?" He sounded vulnerable, small, and George had turned around and crossed the distance between them in an instant to pull his boyfriend into a hug.

"You're not in trouble or anything idiot. I knew for a while and just forgot."

"Yeah but *how* ?"

George buried his face into Sapnap's shoulder. "After Manburg, when we stopped at the lake. It was *way* too hot for you to be comfortable with sitting on the shore the whole time."

Sapnap laughed with an air of self-deprecation, which made George squeeze him in the hug as hard as he could. He was the only one allowed to be mean to Sapnap and the pyromancer was

*especially* not allowed to be mean to himself.

“You’re terrible.” Sapnap said.

Arms draped over the both of them and George felt a chin rest on the top of his head. “Should we look for another way in then?” Dream asked.

“I don’t know if we’ll find one.” George replied. That was a lie, George *knew* in his bones that if they went looking for another entrance to the stronghold, they wouldn’t find one, but he also didn’t want to put any pressure on Sapnap. His magic did wonders at saving them time, but it also made it really easy to suck any hope out of a situation.

Sapnap pulled away from his boyfriends’ arms. “It’ll be fine, you guys will just have to help me get down there.”

It was a lot of trust that Sapnap was putting in them. George grew up in a fishing village and he knew better than most that the fear of drowning could be incredibly overpowering once you were several meters underwater. He couldn’t imagine how terrifying that could be for someone that didn’t have the power to reach the surface on their own. But George wasn’t in the habit of doubting Sapnap, and he never wanted to be the type of person that *would* doubt him, “Okay. If you think you can do it, then that’s how we’ll get inside.”

Dream waded back out into the water and disappeared beneath the surface. Sapnap grabbed his hand in a white knuckled grip the second he was out of sight and George realized he was actually scared. “Are you sure you want to do this?” George asked in a whisper. They were staring out across the ocean’s surface, the waves were gentle even as they crashed into their knees.

“I know we won’t find another entrance and I don’t want to be left behind.” Sapnap replied. George adjusted their hands so their fingers were laced together and began tracing circles on Sapnap’s hand with his thumb until he relaxed his grip. “Dream needs *both* of us. I can do this for him. Even if I’m scared.”

“He’s been a bit of an asshole, hasn’t he?”

Sapnap laughed, “He’s been trying though. We can chew him out when this is all over.”

“We haven’t had a lot of time to talk lately. Just me and you.” George lightly bumped Sapnap’s shoulder with his own and sent his boyfriend a soft smile.

The pyromancer tilted his head to the side until it was laying against George’s shoulder. “He’s been *so* clingy recently. I think he wants to spend as much time with us as he can.”

It was a grim reminder that if this didn’t work, they wouldn’t have much time left with their boyfriend. If they survived the dragon, that is.

Both of them fell silent, continuing to stare out at the water. Around twenty minutes later Dream resurfaced only a few meters away. “I found a way in, there’s a hole in one of the walls on the far side of it.” George frowned, he had been hoping the entrance would be closer, at least then they wouldn’t have to carry Sapnap that far.

Sapnap took a shaky breath and then forced a smile, “Okay, let’s do this thing!”

It was more difficult than George expected for him and Dream to keep Sapnap afloat. Luckily, George was a strong swimmer from growing up in a coastal town and Dream didn’t exactly have to breathe so they were able to swim out to the far side of the stronghold without incident. Sapnap



actually looked like he was enjoying the water and if George wasn't focusing so hard on making sure he didn't sink, he would definitely be making fun of the pyromancer for it.

When it came time to dive down, Sapnap started looking scared again. "Are you sure about this?" George asked him.

"Yeah."

"Then hold your breath." There really wasn't much else George could say to him because then they were diving down, down, down so far that even George's lungs started to burn. He wasn't surprised when Sapnap started panicking then, but they were too far from the surface to turn back. Noticing that his boyfriends were quickly running out of air, Dream grabbed both of them by the wrists and propelled them forward until they were sucked into the stronghold through a hole in the wall.

George gratefully gulped in air as soon as they were out of the water and Sapnap was gasping just as desperately beside him. "We are *never* doing that again!" Sapnap screeched as soon as he had enough air to speak.

"Seconded." George gasped out.

"Oh come on, you guys are just being babies."

Both George and Sapnap sent Dream the *dirtiest* look while the masked man pushed up his mask slightly so they could see his smirk. "Says the guy who can go *hours without breathing* ." Sapnap replied.

Dream fixed his mask and shrugged, "I wouldn't let you guys drown, you're alive aren't you?"

"Barely." George muttered, but got to his feet without any further complaint and looked around. They were in a long dark corridor made of stone bricks and covered in moss. He couldn't see much further than ten feet, the only light coming from a lone torch on the wall behind him. "Now what?" He asked.

Sapnap waded through the water and grabbed the torch off the wall and brought it over to George and then made his own light by igniting a flame in his left hand. "Let's go look for this dumbass portal and fight a dragon!"

The whole time they searched the stronghold for the End portal, George could only think, *A dragon. We're going to be fighting a dragon* . It was exciting to think about, even Sapnap looked a little starstruck by the idea of doing something like a prince from a fairytale. Dream wasn't exactly a princess in a tower, but the sentiment still stood.

Thanks to George's magic, they managed to find the portal in only a few minutes, the twists and turns making sense to him where Sapnap and Dream looked helplessly lost. The portal room was hot, completely overheated by small pools of lava in the corners and a giant one at the center of the room underneath a large ring structure made of material George had never seen before.

"Wow." Sapnap breathed. He had a look of wonder on his face, but the look in his eyes seemed bittersweet. If George had to guess, it was because this was exactly the type of thing Sapnap would want to tell his mom, a fairytale come to life. He reached over and squeezed the pyromancer's hand comfortingly. Sapnap gave him a soft smile.

"Well Dream? How do we activate it?" George asked. The masked man was already standing on the portal frame studying it. Without answering, he dropped an eye of ender into each piece of the

frame.

The second that the last one was in, an eerie noise erupted from the portal, making both George and Sapnap recoil in fright. “What the *hell* was that?” Sapnap asked in a panicked voice.

“Relax Sapnap, it’s just the sound the portal makes.” Dream replied with a laugh, “It sounds a lot like the End actually.”

“And we’re going there? Willingly?”

Dream shrugged and, without warning, he dipped his foot into the portal and disappeared in an instant. Both George and Sapnap scrambled up the stairs to the edge of the portal and stared down into it. It was beautiful, much like the markings on Dream’s chest caused by the parasite, it was a near perfect image of the night sky, moving and flowing, but there was something incredibly off putting about it.

“Do you think he’s alright?” Sapnap asked.

George shrugged, “Only one way to find out.” And he stepped into the portal himself.

It was *awful* . He felt stretched, like his entire body was somehow being pulled through a straw, and his vision was filled with so much static it began to make his head fuzzy. But the worst part of being transported through the End portal was the silence. It was so big, oppressive, deafening. And then George was upright again, on his own two feet with sturdy ground beneath him.

He wanted to throw up.

The novelty of going to another dimension and fighting a dragon wore off the second George no longer felt like his brains were going to be squeezed out of his nose and he was standing above a void on a small obsidian platform, his own pounding heartbeat drowned out by the deafening roar of the very dragon they were meant to kill.

George stumbled backwards instinctively, but where he expected solid ground, his foot only met air. He gasped involuntarily, realizing he had come all this way, but he was going to die in a fall into the void.

A hand gripped his arm in a white knuckle grip, Dream’s hand, and his masked boyfriend pulled him safely back onto the platform. Sapnap appeared just behind Dream and promptly puked over the edge into the void. Dream grabbed the back of Sapnap’s jacket as a precaution until the pyromancer fully regained his balance.

“Okay. That was somehow *worse* than almost drowning.” Sapnap complained as soon as he stopped dry heaving, his stomach long since emptied of his breakfast.

Another roar from the dragon shook George to the core. “I honestly didn’t think we’d land this close to her.” Dream admitted sheepishly when he saw the terrified looks on his boyfriends faces.

“We need to kill *that* ?” Sapnap asked incredulously, pointing to the large land mass in front of them with large obsidian towers that seemed to disappear into the dark sky and a dragon, black as night, swooping gracefully between them as it roared.

George felt just as apprehensive now that he’d seen the dragon, but he felt that they were missing a step. “How the hell are we going to get over there?”

“That’s the easy part.” Dream replied.

“Oh *really* ?”

“Sure. Just watch this.” Dream pulled one of the spare ender pearls from his bag and tossed it towards the landmass then wrapped his arms tightly around both his boyfriends’ waists.

“What the hell is that supposed to be?” George felt his stomach somersault and then he was no longer standing on the obsidian platform. “What the fuck?”

“Ender pearls are how endermen are able to teleport.” Dream explained with a shrug.

“Right.” George nodded. He felt like he needed a moment to catch his breath, but he didn’t think he was going to get the chance. “Right.”

“What are you guys waiting for? Let’s kill this dragon!” Sapnap grinned at his boyfriends. He had no idea how Sapnap was managing to keep his cool when George was seconds away from a panic attack himself, but he didn’t have time for that. George had to pull himself together because his boyfriends wouldn’t be able to look after them once the dragon started attacking.

He took a deep breath, centering himself, and then nodded with more surety than he felt. “Let’s go then.”

The three of them turned towards the pillars, “We need to destroy the crystals on top of the towers, they heal her when she’s near them.”

“How do you expect us to do that, wise guy?” Sapnap replied.

“They’re incredibly explosive. An arrow or a bit of fire should do the trick.”

George nodded and immediately pulled out his bow. The three of them dropped their bags, anything other than weapons would only slow them down and they could return for them later. Even if they lost their things, the few seconds of speed they could get by not carrying them were worth more than anything inside them. “Alright. Let’s do this.”

They sprung out from their hiding spot behind a rock and began sprinting for the towers. George came to a stop after a few meters to draw his bow. It took him half a second to aim at the crystal on the closest tower and fire, then he was running again, not looking to see if his shot landed. He knew his aim was true.

A flash of heat came from George's right as Sapnap sent a rain of fire at the next crystal. Both crystals exploded in thunderous booms in quick succession, finally drawing the attention of the dragon.

It spun in a tight circle and then was suddenly swooping directly at George and Sapnap. Before it reached them, Dream appeared, leaping an inhuman distance through the air and slashing the dragon’s neck with his sword. The dragon’s course was slightly altered, and George and Sapnap were able to dive out of the way.

They had to trust that Dream would be fine while keeping the dragon’s attention, they couldn’t afford to be distracted, not when the dragon’s defeat hinged on their ability to destroy all the crystals.

George fired three more arrows, three more crystals blew.

Enderman began to swarm them. To protect the dragon or the crystals, George didn’t know. He was barely able to avoid their attacks, barely able to stay ahead of them. His lungs were burning,

his vision blurry. He was scared that he would pass out from lightheadedness, but George couldn't afford to stop.

Somewhere along the way, he and Sapnap split up to cover more ground. George refused to think about it over the sound of the dragon's roar. Only the sound of more explosions in the distance told him that Sapnap was still alright.

“ *SAPNAP!* ” Dream screamed, making George's head whip around. The dragon was diving, not for Dream, but Sapnap, who was cornered by enderman and had nowhere to go. It barrelled through the enderman, sending them flying, and George lost sight of the pyromancer as his own enemies caught up to him. He barely had time to dodge before being forced on the run again.

His heart was pounding. He didn't know if Sapnap was okay or even if he was alive, all he could do was shoot the crystals and hope that they could beat the dragon before it killed them. It was almost comical now, how excited they were to face a dragon, and now George couldn't even blame the dust in the air for the tears in his eyes, his goggles firmly in place to protect them.

He had three arrows left. One crystal remained. George drew his bow and at the same second he fired, an enderman clawed him in the arm. His shot went wide and George was forced to start running again.

Two more arrows. He couldn't afford to take the time to stop and fire, otherwise the enderman would just continue to get in the way of his shots.

A cry rang out across the wasteland. It was Dream screaming in pain. Suddenly George was terrified, more than he had ever been in his life. What if his boyfriends were both dead? What if he had to kill the dragon himself? He only had two arrows and nothing else. Would he have to take a sword from one of their dead bodies?

George wanted to puke.

He pushed the thoughts aside, he had to believe they were alive, had to believe the dragon could still be beaten.

Without stopping to aim, George turned and fired an arrow midstep. It would hit. He knew it would hit. The sound of the last crystal exploding was like a breath of fresh air. One step down, now they just had to kill a dragon.

The dragon had landed in the center of the clearing and George could see Dream sprinting at it with his sword out. He was alive. The relief he felt made George's knees weak, but he couldn't stop with the enderman still chasing him.

Something was wrong though. George could tell the dragon was already heavily injured and as Dream stabbed it again in the side, he knew they were close to winning, but he couldn't shake the feeling that something was *wrong* .

The dragon took flight, Dream's sword still stuck in its side, and made a wide sweeping arc through the sky. George couldn't care less as he watched Dream collapse to the ground, grasping painfully at his chest. The dragon flew around a pillar and turned until it was facing Dream. Not that it mattered, the world went out of focus and all George could see was Dream.

Dream was kneeling on the ground. The dragon was barreling towards him and he was just *kneeling on the ground* -

Time slowed to a crawl. George had one arrow left. He drew. He aimed. It was a more difficult

shot than George had made, *ever* , the dragon diving faster than he could track with his eyes and from a distance that he wasn't sure if his bow could reach.

He had one shot. He couldn't do it, but Dream was still right there, unarmed and collapsed in pain as the inky black tendrils of the parasite climbed his neck and George knew he had to take the shot, but what if he missed?

George closed his eyes and fired.

A deafening groan filled the air followed by what sounded like an entire forest of trees being knocked over in a hurricane and then nothing. George opened his eyes just in time to see the dragon explode in beams of white and purple light, the enderman screaming in agony as they were reduced to dust, and then he was sprinting towards his masked boyfriend faster than he ever ran in his life.

He fell to his knees in front of Dream and grabbed his face in his hands, "Dream! Dream, are you okay? Please be okay I-" George broke off in a choked sob.

Dream laughed, "George! You did it! You killed the dragon!"

"I don't care about the dragon Dream, I care about *you!* "

"Where's Sapnap?" He asked instead of answering.

George let out a strangled noise, "I don't- I don't *know* . I lost track of him."

"Let's go find him." Dream took hold of George's hands and pulled them away from his face before getting to his feet and pulling George up as well. The two of them began walking, looking for any sign of the pyromancer.

"Sapnap!" George shouted, "Sapnap, where are you?"

There wasn't an immediate answer, but eventually, "Over here George." The response was loud enough for George to locate his boyfriend, but Sapnap sounded exhausted, and when he finally found the pyromancer collapsed at the bottom of a crater, he looked it too.

"Sapnap! Are you okay?" George jumped down into the crater to help his boyfriend to his feet, Dream following close behind.

"Yeah." Sapnap replied, "I think I sprained my ankle though."

Together, Dream and George were able to help Sapnap to his feet and climb out of the crater. It took several minutes of looking for a safe path that was wide enough for at least one of them to support Sapnap and give him enough room to keep his balance, but they eventually made it to the top.

"Did it work?" Sapnap asked quietly, still holding desperately onto George for balance. George turned to look at Dream. He didn't look like he was in pain anymore, but George knew better than to think that meant anything. Carefully, Dream removed his gloves and rolled up his sleeves, showing his forearms to his boyfriends.

Both Sapnap and George leaned over curiously. His arms were no longer covered in the inky blackness of the parasite, in its place were white lines that were barely visible on Dream's skin, but George was still able to make out the shapes that looked like lightning striking across his arms. Scars, George realized, it was the damage the parasite left behind, but with this proof he was able

to relax knowing it was gone and Dream was no longer in danger.

George sighed and pried Sapnap's arm from his shoulder until the pyromancer managed to balance on his own. They did it. They beat the dragon, they were all alive and safe, and their adventure was officially over, which meant there was only one thing left for George to do.

He punched Dream.

George punched Dream in the middle of his insufferable smiley face mask as hard as he could. Luckily, Dream let the punch whip his head backwards, or George would probably have broken his hand, but he was too angry to be grateful. All the rage that had been building from before suddenly came spilling out as he screamed at his boyfriend, "You asshole! You goddamn asshole! How fucking dare you treat us like tools to save your life!"

"George--"

"No! Shut up Dream! You don't even get to *try* apologizing until I'm finished." George snapped, "You dragged us across the whole continent and refused to tell us why and *we followed you* because we *loved* you, and then you turned around and spat on everything we gave you the second we stopped being useful!"

Sapnap placed a hand on George's shoulder, trying to calm him, but George was only just getting started, "And you! You just kept *taking it* and bottling it up because you seem to think the only way we are capable of loving you is if you're some perfect happy-go-lucky boyfriend! How am I supposed to know if something is wrong then? How am I supposed to help *fix it*?"

"George--" Sapnap tried.

"No Sapnap," George's voice broke and tears flooded his eyes, "Just no."

"*George*."

It was then that George realized Sapnap wasn't looking at him. He was looking with wide eyes past him, over George's shoulder where Dream was standing. George doesn't think he had ever seen Sapnap look so shocked and he turned to see what had made the pyromancer speechless.

Dream has freckles. That's what he noticed first, the freckles that dust along his nose and cheeks in constellations that George wants to commit to memory. Dream tossed his mask aside, marched right up to George, and pulled him into a kiss that made George's toes curl, made him question every kiss he had before then, because *nothing* compared.

"I love you." Dream whispered when he pulled away so only he could hear, kept George's face cradled in his hands inches from his own, breathing the same air as he spoke, "Guardians, I love you more than there are stars in the sky and I will love you for every second of every day until I die and then I will still love you, even when my bones have turned to dust and the world keeps spinning without us because you and Sapnap are my reason for breathing. I will spend the rest of my life trying to make it up to you, until you forgive me, until *loved* becomes *love* again, and even after that I will still keep proving it to you. I *love* you both. There is nothing I wouldn't do, nothing I wouldn't give, everything I have is yours for as long as you want it."

He turned then, grabbing Sapnap and whispering another confession to the pyromancer while they held each other's faces, cupped gently in their hands. Sapnap was tracing the freckles along Dream's cheeks with his thumbs in complete awe. They stood there in a moment of their own as if George hadn't just been thrown into an emotional free fall.

George was floating. He couldn't look away from Dream, from his face, from the blonde's sheepish grin as he stepped back from kissing the life out of their boyfriend.

"You-" His voice was strangled by his own throat. He was overcome with so much *affection* for Dream that he couldn't contain it within his own body, and didn't know where to put it. George took Dream's hand in his own, laced their fingers together, and let the feelings spill out of him in sobs that ripped suddenly through his chest. "You're the *worst* ." he bawled and buried his face in Dream's chest.

Beside him, he could hear Sapnap crying too. "I hate you," he said, muffled into Dream's coat, "I hate you I hate you I hate you." What George really meant was *I love you* and he meant it with every fiber of his being. He didn't know how to say it right, couldn't make the words form in his mouth, so he just said it over and over and over again. "I hate you." *I love you* . "I hate you so much." *More than you know* .

Dream only pulled both of his boyfriends tightly into his arms. "I know," He murmured into George's hair, "I know."

## Chapter End Notes

Haha bittersweet ending go brrrrrrrrrrrr

All that's left is the epilogue! Woohoo! No joke this has been a blast to write and I'm so grateful to each and every one of you for reading, leaving kudos, and commenting. I'm gonna take a small break from this fic to work on some other projects, so the epilogue is still a ways out, BUT IT IS COMING. Hopefully within a month, but I've taken longer breaks from this fic than that so..... sorry not sorry? Love ya!

# We Begin Again

## Chapter Summary

All endings are new beginnings

## Chapter Notes

Fanart:

[@Eggmug1](#)

[@lowasfound](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There is a pyromancer who was raised among bookshelves, his life taking place between pages, covered in fresh ink, lit by candlelight. He didn't play with fire, but it all burned down anyway.

Sapnap still thinks about his parents, about their cozy house that was more a library than a home, but it doesn't sting as much as it once did, instead the pain has turned into a dull ache that fades with every day that passes. He misses them, but it's bittersweet more than anything else.

Dream buys them a house. It's by a lake, one that reminds Sapnap of the one they stopped at after Manburg, but this lake is *theirs* and there are no memories left that can taint it. Sapnap gets the whole attic to fill with shelves upon shelves of books. With each one he collects, he's reminded of his mother.

"Do you think we have space for another shelf?" Sapnap asks one day while they're eating breakfast, making George snort.

Dream scratches his head thoughtfully. He's wearing his mask today, but that doesn't mean much. As long as George and Sapnap are the only people around, Dream will put it on and take it off throughout the day as it strikes his fancy. "I dunno, maybe we could move the shelves closer together? We might be able to squeeze another one in."

"Eventually the space between the shelves is going to get too small to walk through." George pointed out, "Why don't we start putting some in one of the bedrooms, we only use one anyways."

The masked man shrugs, "Works for me. I'll clear the furniture out of one later to make room."

Butterflies flutter around in Sapnap's stomach. He knows that his boyfriends love him, but it's nice to be reminded in simple ways, like how they make room for his rapidly expanding book collection without questions.

George stretches and stands from the kitchen table. "Come on Sapnap, we can worry about your books later, you promised to let me teach you to swim today."

Sapnap makes a face, but obediently follows George out to the lake. The lesson goes horribly and



the two of them end up spending half an hour just splashing each other instead of doing any swimming, but Sapnap laughs harder than he has in a long time. At the end of the day his cheeks hurt from grinning so much.

When the three of them climb into bed that night, Sapnap doesn't think about his parents like he used to most nights. He is in love, he is happy, he is fulfilled in a way he never thought was possible all those years ago, sitting in front of a mirror, a portrait of a dead man. He misses his parents, but he doesn't cry for them, because he knows he'll be alright.

~

There is a masked boy from another world who was saved by a kind man that loved gardening and baking, making a home in the middle of the woods where the boy thought he had none. He left. He left when he shouldn't have and longs to return and make amends.

Bad's house is exactly as Dream remembers, nestled in a small clearing, a garden overflowing with flowers and vines from years of hard work and care. He can see smoke coming from the chimney and knows that the man is home.

Dream chews on his lip, nervous about seeing Bad again, especially after how he left, but then Sapnap bumps his shoulder and grins. His boyfriends make him a braver person, he loves them for it, and for so many other reasons. They're incredible and he wants to introduce them to the only family he really has left.

They approach the house and Dream is surprised to see a young woman in the garden feeding the chickens. She looks up, almost like she senses someone watching her, and her eyes widen when she spots Dream.

"Dream?" And that is not the voice Dream expects to hear coming from a slight young woman.

He doesn't recognize her. "Do I know you?" Dream asks, confused.

"I sure fucking hope so, dipshit." The woman, no, *man* replies. He's grinning despite his harsh language.

*Dipshit*. The word practically flings Dream back into his childhood, there's only been one person Dream has ever heard say it. "Finn?"

"Hell yeah man! I knew you'd recognize me." Finn glances behind Dream at Sapnap and George. "Who're your friends?"

"Boyfriends, actually." Sapnap corrects.

Finn grins. "Wicked."

Dream feels out of place. He didn't expect Finn to be so friendly with him after how they parted. A *monster*, Finn had called him.

"You're probably looking for Bad." Finn says. "He went into town for some groceries, he'll be back in an hour or so. Go ahead and come in, it's as much your house as it is mine."

"You live here?" Dream asks, surprised.

Finn looks sheepish then, maybe even a little bitter. "Yeah, my parents kicked me out when I didn't outgrow the 'dressing like a girl' phase. Bad let me live here in exchange for helping him

start a farm, it's not a bad way to live."

George sighs suddenly and pushes past Dream. He marches right up to Finn and offers a hand, "I'm George, one of the boyfriends."

"Pleasure." Finn takes his hand and gives it a firm shake. "I'm Finn."

"Great, can we go inside?" George asks.

"Uh sure, go ahead."

George turns around and grabs Sapnap. He gives Dream a look that says '*talk to him*' and then disappears inside the house with the pyromancer. Dream hates how perceptive his boyfriend is sometimes.

"They seem lovely." Finn says.

Dream laughs. "They're actually really annoying."

Finn grins and the masked man knows that he figured out what Dream really meant. *I love them*, he didn't say.

"I owe you an apology." Finn says suddenly.

"What?"

"I shouldn't have run, back then." Finn admits quietly. "You're not a monster, and you never were. Nobody that's as good of a friend as you could ever be a monster."

The memory stings, even ten years later, but Dream refuses to show that he's affected.

"You know, you made me a braver person. I missed having you around and I wish I had been able to apologize, to make it up to you, before you left. I was just a dumb kid, and so were you, but you were still my best friend and I should have done better."

It's stupid, but Dream wishes he had done better too. He misses being Finn's friend, even though their friendship will probably never be the same, it would be nice to have a best friend again. Dream decides he's going to forgive him.

"I never gave you a chance to apologize."

"I still should have tried harder. I saw your face and freaked out, but every time I think about it, you just had a normal face, but it terrified me anyways."

"I have that effect on people."

"On your boyfriends?" Just the suggestion that Dream scares his boyfriends is rude, but he lets it slide with a scoff.

"I have better control than that now," Dream says.

Finn hums in a way that suggests understanding, but Dream actually isn't sure. He's never been sure when it comes to Finn. "They seem a little too normal to be *your* boyfriends if you ask me."

Dream doesn't get the chance to respond. A loud crash from the house makes them both turn and Dream can distantly hear his boyfriends yelling at each other inside. "Please tell me they didn't."

He mutters to himself and stalks inside with Finn right on his heels to investigate. Sapnap and George are standing in the living room arguing, broken glass is scattered on the floor between them.

“I *told* you that you shouldn’t pick up the vase!” George snaps.

Sapnap makes a bunch of sounds to poorly imitate George’s accent before replying, “*You’re* the one that threw pillows at me until I dropped it!”

“I changed my mind,” Finn says with a laugh, “the three of you are a match made in heaven.”

“What?” Sapnap asks, he sounds scandalized by the idea that he could in any way be a good fit for his boyfriends. The ones *he* chose to date.

“Don’t worry about the vase boys, I got it.” Finn ignores Sapnap’s outburst and picks up the closest shard. There’s a soft pull in the room that Dream recognizes as Finn’s stitching magic, and then all the pieces fly across the room and mend together until Finn is holding a completely unblemished vase. “There, good as new.”

“You’ve gotten better at that.” Dream says.

Finn snorts and sets the vase down on a table in the corner of the room. “It’s amazing what practice can do for you, eh?”

The front door swings open, making everyone freeze. “Finn! You muffin! How many times have I told you not to leave out the chicken fe-” Bad trails off when he and Dream lock eyes.

“Hi Bad.” Dream says sheepishly.

Bad drops the bag of groceries he is holding and marches across the room towards. Dream has faced down brigands, assassins, zombies, murderers, a goddamn *dragon*, but watching Bad approach is scarier than all of that combined.

Dream squeezes his eyes shut, scared of all the things Bad could do or say, probably shout at him and kick him out for being an ungrateful brat. None of that comes.

Bad throws his arms around Dream, wraps him in the tightest hug he ever had. He’s crying, Dream can smell the salt of Bad’s tears, and he is so caught off guard that he forgets how to speak.

“Welcome home.” Bad snuffles, and that’s all it takes for Dream to relax into the embrace and wrap his arms around Bad in return.

“I’m home.” Dream replies, “I’m home.”

“Well this is pretty fucking tender, isn’t it?” Finn says. Dream can’t see him, but he can hear the grin in his voice.

Bad squirms out of Dream’s arms. “*Language!*” Dream bursts into laughter. He didn’t expect anything less from someone as unsentimental as Finn.

That night, Bad makes rabbit stew. He’s absolutely *delighted* by Sapnap and George, and after their initial reservations fade, they take to Bad’s unusual personality like a duck to water. It’s kind of amusing, watching them test the limits of what language Bad will scold them for, and despite how much of a nuisance they are being, Dream can tell Bad adores them both already. Dream didn’t realize how much he wants Bad’s approval until he has it, and it feels nice.

Later in the night, Bad brings out some extra bedding and shows George and Sapnap into Dream's childhood bedroom. It surprises him how little it's changed, and his boyfriend coo over all the things that Dream had left behind from his childhood. The two of them run out of energy fast and fall asleep only seconds after finally climbing into bed.

Ever since beating the dragon, Dream sleeps, if only to have the quiet intimacy of waking up next to his boyfriends even if he still doesn't need to rest. Tonight though, he doesn't feel like sleeping, not yet anyways.

He goes back out into the living room where Bad is sitting alone, Finn also having gone to bed. Bad is holding a box and when Dream looks over his shoulder, he's surprised to see the pieces of his old mask inside. He'd kept them, even after Dream had discarded them so easily. It was sweet, and sentimental, and now, years later when Dream is finally able to appreciate something lovingly made by his father and mourn the loss of both his people and his family, he's glad that Bad kept it all this time.

"*You've gotten so big.*" Bad says, the Ender sounds clunky and awkward on his tongue from lack of practice, but Dream can still understand him perfectly.

"*I grew up.*" He replies.

Bad laughs softly. "*And you did it so well, all on your own.*"

Dream hums and sits beside Bad on the couch. "*I had help.*"

"*Really? You never were the type to accept help.*"

It's funny that Bad would say that when the person who helped Dream the most is sitting right beside him. "*You gave it to me anyway.*"

Bad inhales sharply and turns to stare at Dream. After a moment of hesitation, Dream removes his mask and offers the other man a soft smile. "*After you left I would hear rumors about a masked man stealing and killing and- What happened to you?*"

"A lot." Dream replies in English. "I'll tell you everything, if you want."

"Please." Bad's voice sounds strained with barely contained emotion, and Dream was never one to deny the man an explanation.

They talk through the night. Dream tells Bad about stealing for money, about the people he killed for doing things much worse than murder, about figuring out his abilities, meeting Sapnap, meeting George, about falling in love during a journey across the continent, about being sick and why he needed to go home, the journal, the nether, about how he almost fucked up the best thing he ever had, the dragon, but most importantly he tells Bad about the little cottage he and his boyfriends own, their life and every day antics. It's Dream's favorite part, after all.

Bad cries, he cries a lot actually, out of distress, sadness, anger, but most of all out of joy. He tells Dream how happy he is that he's built up a good life, even if the road to get there was rough.

After that they sit mostly in comfortable silence until the sun rises and when Dream hears the others moving about as they wake up, he puts his mask back on, the childlike wonder of the smile on it matches the one on his face.

Dream, Sapnap, and George help with the chores until midmorning when Bad waves them off and Finn takes them into town. Mega is there, working as the town blacksmith. He seems more

surprised to see Dream than Bad had been, but instead of making a big deal out of it, Mega just elbows him in the gut in a way that is so like him that Dream bursts into laughter.

Vurb isn't in town. He became a storyteller and travels a lot, but he comes back to visit occasionally. Spifey is also long gone, but neither Mega nor Finn knows what he's doing, both of them finally cutting ties with him after he pushed the limits of their friendship too far.

When they get back to Bad's cottage, there is a perfect cube of dirt, a meter tall, sitting in the garden. Finn sighs. "Bad!" He calls as he enters the house. "That stupid enderman came back!"

Bad comes out a few seconds later with a shovel and a scowl. "I am getting really tired of having to clear dirt out of my garden."

"We could always just-" Sapnap pauses to draw a line across his neck "-it, you know?"

The gardener frowns, looking slightly uncomfortable, before shaking his head. "No, it brings rare flowers sometimes, which are nice to put in the garden, and other than inconveniencing me by putting blocks in the middle of my garden, it's never done anything wrong."

Dream tilts his head to the side, sensing there's more to it, but he waits until Sapnap shrugs and goes inside with George to ask. "What else? I know you're not squeamish about killing mobs."

"It's just-" Bad replies as he digs his shovel into the dirt block. "I looked at its face once. It was an accident really, but even when I looked it in the eyes it didn't so much as fidget, let alone attack me."

*Oh* . "And you think it-?"

"I'm hoping. I guess that's something I never taught you about humanity, hope." Bad laughs, bittersweet.

The thing is, Dream knows a thing or two about hope, he did it often over the past several years. Hoping that Sapnap and George returned his feelings, hoping they would be okay, hoping that he didn't manage to irreparably damage their relationship, and he understands the bittersweet feeling that Bad probably has aching in his chest. Dream can't do anything about it though. There is nothing to be done but wait for answers that may or may not come, to wait for the possibility that all the love Bad ever held in his heart for another person could come to fruition. Dream knows how it feels to love and be loved, and he thinks Bad deserves that too, more than anyone.

"Yeah." Dream replies. "I hope so too."

~

There is a man who wants more than life dealt him, who is restless. He didn't leave his village's idyllic lifestyle just to settle down into another one after completing just one measly adventure, even if this life is better, even if it is happier. He is insatiable.

George wakes up earlier than normal, the sun's rays barely peeking over the horizon and illuminating their bedroom in a dim glow. Sapnap is still fast asleep, snoring softly on his right, but when he looks left, Dream is turned towards him, face bare and wry smile on his lips. George could look at Dream's face every day for the rest of his life and never grow tired of the sight. He reaches over and pokes Dream on the face, right between his eyebrows, making the blonde snort.

Dream catches George's wrist as he pulls his hand away and presses a kiss to each of his fingertips. It is a soft, quiet intimacy that makes George's face burn. He buries himself deeper

into their blankets to hide his blush and Dream shakes with silent laughter.

After a moment, George peeks his head out. Dream is still looking at him with a smile on his lips. They stare at each other, George doesn't know for how long.

"Hey." George eventually whispers, careful to not be too loud and wake Sapnap.

Dream cocks his head, intrigued. George normally isn't talkative in the morning, he knows, but he can't help the words that are ready to burst from his chest. "What?" Dream replies.

George stares again. He wants to say it, feels it with his whole body, but the words are caught in his throat. He swallows, squeezes his eyes shut.

"I know." Dream says before George just about gives up. "I know. I love you too."

George relaxes. He didn't realize he had tensed up in the first place. It's nice, knowing that Dream knows him better than anybody, that he can tell what George wants to say just by looking at him. George buries his head in Dream's chest, he'll say it one day, out loud for Dream to hear. Not now, but George knows it'll be soon.

He *loves* Dream. It hasn't been loved for a long while, and George knows his love for Dream will never be past tense again.

Between one breath and the next, George falls asleep in Dream's arms.

Sapnap wakes him when he flops over on top of both he and Dream. "I can't believe you guys would cuddle without me."

George can't see his face, but he knows that Sapnap is pouting. "Get *off* me you weirdo." He complains and pushes at Sapnap to try and escape in vain.

"No." Sapnap replies and George flops back, giving up completely.

Dream bursts into wheezing that George recognizes as his laughter and the older man wriggles an arm free to elbow him in the gut. The blonde immediately puts George into a playful chokehold and messes up his hair.

"I was thinking about making a pie today." Sapnap says, completely ignoring his boyfriends' scuffle.

George successfully bats away Dream's hands. "A pie, huh?" Both Sapnap and Dream pause and then stare at him. "What? What is it?"

"It's just-" Sapnap starts and then trails off.

"You sound bored." Dream completes his sentence, choosing to be much more direct than the pyromancer was obviously planning.

George takes a moment to ponder that. "Huh."

The thing is, George knows he's restless, knows he's looking for something he can't quite see. He thought that being with his boyfriends would be enough, that life with them in a lovely lakeside cottage would be enough to satiate his hunger, but there is still a gaping hole in his chest where something is meant to be. His boyfriends make every day of his life better, make him a better and happier person, but they are people, and people can't complete each other.

“Well?” Dream asks.

George looks at him, looks at his constellation of freckles and eyes that are too green to be human and knows he could never leave him, he could never leave either of them. He just wouldn't be happy. “Well what?”

“What are we doing?” Sapnap replies easily. And that's the thing, their words are so vague, but George knows exactly what they mean. Whatever George decides to do, wherever he decides to go, they'll walk with him side by side, making the path wider if they have to, just for George, just because he wants to.

“You know, I heard this rumor about an underwater temple on the other side of the ocean that is haunted by a sea monster.” Dream says.

Of course he knows. Of course Dream can tell that George is just itching for adventure, because that is what he set out to do in the first place after all. He left Britain, followed two people he only knew for seven days, because he wants, wants, wants, selfishly and unabashedly.

“Hell yeah man! I can show off my sweet new swimming skills.” Sapnap says and climbs to his feet to jump around on the mattress. George barely manages to pull in any stray limbs to avoid being jumped on.

George laughs, “What skills? You barely doggy paddle.”

“Just you wait George, by the end of this trip I'll be a better swimmer than you.” And then Sapnap was gone, leaping off the bed onto the ground and sprinting out their bedroom door.

There is no discussion, no weighing of pros and cons, Sapnap and Dream simply saw what George wants, and decided to give in. “I love you.” George says it suddenly, the words spilling from his mouth before he even gets the chance to think about them.

Dream smiles, soft and sweet, his cheeks dusted pink with a light blush. “I know.”

George rolls his eyes. “You're such an asshole Dream.”

“I know.” Dream says again and his smile turns into a wide grin before he leaps out of bed and chases after Sapnap.

Sapnap and Dream are packed, ready by the time George gets downstairs, and he has to rush to find his boots and goggles while they both tease and say they'll leave without him. They won't, but George moves faster anyway.

This time, as the three of them chase each other down the road, this time George looks back, and he knows they'll be home again soon.

## Chapter End Notes

Switch to present tense pog!!!!

Thanks again to everyone who read, commented, gave kudos, I love you guys so much!! Even though I'm not into the Dream smp and related mcyt content anymore, I'm still really sad to see this fic finished, because it was the start for me. It was the

first thing I was brave enough to post. Either way, this is exciting!!! There are so many new opportunities and avenues opened up for me, and even though I know most of you won't follow me into new fandoms, I'm so glad you guys were here with me for this one!!!! Thank you so much!!!!

(I want to also give a shoutout to the people who made fanart of this fic, [@Eggmug1](#) on twitter with a lovely fanart of ch 10 and [@lowasfound](#) on tumblr with their awesome character study of Dream!!!

please, please, PLEASE go check both of them out and give them love, they both did such an awesome job<3)

## End Notes

I'm not really taking requests per se, but if y'all want to comment some suggestions for chapters and I find one inspirational, I will not hesitate to jump on that.

Chronological order:

13, 10, 2, 3, 5, 19, 1, 4, 8, 12, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 9, 14, 16, 20, 21, 18, 22, 23, 24

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